

Chapter 4 – Analysis (2107 words)

This analysis examines how police officer's perceptions and interpretations of domestic violence influence their responses during incidents and the impact this has on victim safety and the likelihood of arrest. The findings provide insight into public perceptions of domestic violence, barriers to seeking police assistance, and factors affecting police decision-making. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, this section critically explores the key themes emerging from the responses and situates them within the broader literature on domestic violence policing.

The questionnaire received 100% participation, meaning that all 62 individuals who accessed the survey agreed to take part (see figure 1). This full participation rate suggests a high level of interest and engagement with the topic, likely due to personal or professional connections to domestic violence.

The sample consisted of diverse participants, with 49.2% identifying as members of the public, 9.8% as police officers, 18% as family or friends of a victim, and 23% as victims or survivors of domestic violence. Most respondents (75.8%) were female, while 22.6% were male, and 1.6% chose not to answer (see figure 2). Given this it is possible that many participants felt a strong motivation to share their experiences or perspectives on police responses to domestic violence.

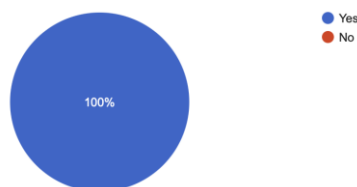


Figure 1: Engagement rate of respondents (Source: Questionnaire Results,2025)

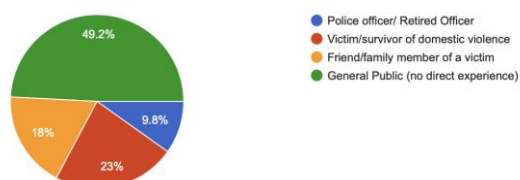


Figure 2: Participation rate of respondents (Source: Questionnaire Results,2025)

The age distribution of respondents indicates that the largest group was individuals ages 25-34, making up 33.9% of participants, followed by other age brackets contributing smaller proportions (see figure 3). This suggests that younger adults, particularly those in their late twenties and early thirties, were the most engaged demographic in this study.

This trend could be attributed to several factors. Firstly, individuals in this age group may be more likely to have encountered domestic violence personally or through peers, leading to greater awareness and willingness to engage in discussions surrounding police responses.

Conversely, the lower participation of older age groups may reflect differences in digital engagement, awareness, or willingness to disclose opinions on sensitive issues like domestic violence. This potential age-related bias in the sample should be considered when interpreting findings, as perspectives from older individuals may be underrepresented.

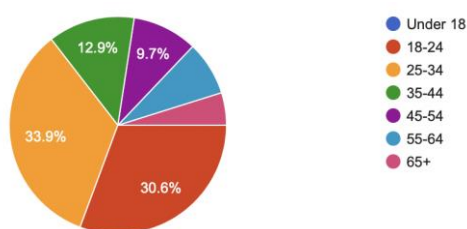


Figure 3: Age distribution of respondents (Source: Questionnaire Results,2025)

Overall, the dominance of the 25-34 age group in the sample highlights the importance of tailoring domestic violence awareness, support services, and police force engagement to meet the needs of this demographic, while also exploring ways to improve engagement with older age groups in future research.

Most respondents identified as female (75.8%), with 22.6% identifying as male, and 1.6% choosing not to answer (see figure 4). The significant overrepresentation of female participants aligns with existing research indicating that women are more likely to engage in discussions and research on domestic violence, given that they are disproportionately affected by such incidents (Walby and Towers, 2018). This suggests that female respondents may

have felt a stronger personal or empathetic connection to the topic, motivating their participation.

The lower male participation rate may reflect societal stigmas surrounding male victimization or a perception that domestic violence is primarily a women's issue, which can contribute to underreporting and disengagement from discussions. The 1.6% of respondents who chose not to disclose their gender highlights the importance of considering gender diversity and inclusivity in domestic violence research and policing responses.

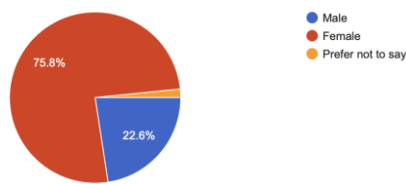


Figure 4: Gender distribution of respondents (Source: Questionnaire Results, 2025)

In terms of ethnicity, most respondents identified as white (98.4%), with only 1.6% identifying as South Asian (see figure 5). This suggests that the survey primarily captured perspectives from a predominantly white demographic, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to more ethnically diverse populations.

The lack of representation from Black, mixed, or other minority ethnic groups could be due to several factors, including differences in community engagements with research, access to the questionnaire, or trust in institutions discussing domestic violence and policing. Studies indicate that ethnic minorities often face unique barriers in seeking police intervention for domestic violence, such as language barriers, cultural stigmas and distrust of police forces (Gill and Harrison, 2019). The limited ethnic diversity in the sample suggests a need for future research to explore how racial and cultural factors shape experiences of domestic violence and police responses.

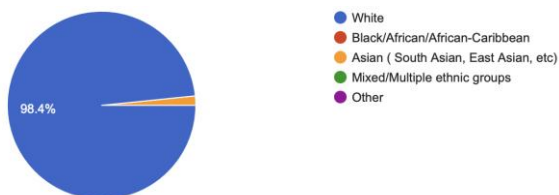


Figure 5: Ethnicity distribution of respondents (Source: Questionnaire Results, 2025).

When asked about their involvement in domestic violence incidents, 48.4% of respondents stated they had no direct experience, while 19.4% identified as victims or survivor's, 22% as witnesses, and 9.7% as police officers responding to such cases (see figure 6). This distribution highlights that over half of the respondents (51.6%) had some level of exposure to domestic violence, whether as victims, witnesses, or professionals handling these cases. The presence of police officers among respondents provides an insight into police officers perspectives, while the significant proportion of victims and witnesses emphasizes the firsthand experiences of those affected.

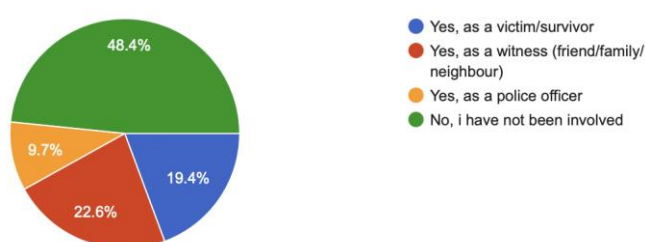


Figure 7: Respondents' involvement in domestic violence incidents (Source: Questionnaire results, 2025)

When asked how common domestic violence is in their communities, 33.9% of respondents stated it is “somewhat common”, while another 33.9% described it as “very common” (see figure 8). This means that 67.8% of respondents perceive domestic violence as a frequent occurrence in their area, reinforcing the idea that it is a persistent and visible societal issue. In contrast 22.6% believed it was “somewhat rare”. And 9.7% considered it “very rare”, suggesting that perceptions of prevalence may vary based on personal experiences, awareness, and community factors. These findings indicate that domestic violence is generally recognized as a serious and ongoing problem, with most respondents acknowledging its regular occurrence. The high percentage of those identifying it as “very common” or “somewhat common” suggests that police intervention strategies, community support services and awareness campaigns need to address the widespread nature of domestic violence.

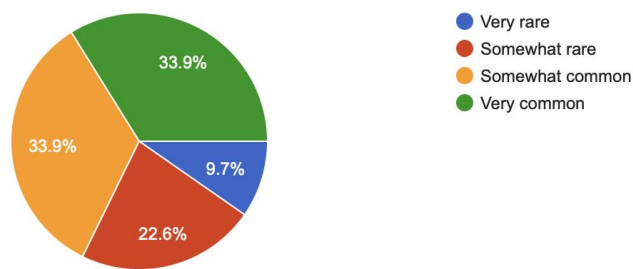


Figure 8: Perceived prevalence of domestic violence in respondents' communities (Source: Questionnaire Results,2025)

The most cited barrier preventing victims from seeking police assistance was the fear of retaliation from the abuser, with 51.6% of respondents identifying this as their primary concern (see figure 9). This finding aligns with existing research, which highlights that many victims hesitate to report domestic violence due to potential escalation of abuse, threats, or further harm from their preparator (Robinson and Chandek, 2000).

Additionally, 29% of respondents stated that victims fear not being believed, which suggests a lack of trust in the criminal justice system and a concern that reports may not be takins seriously. This reflects broader societal issues surrounding victim credibility and the potential for police officers to dismiss or minimize allegations. Furthermore, 12.6% of respondents pointed to a general lack of trust in the police, while 6.5% highlighted financial dependence on the abuser as a significant obstacle. These responses suggest both systematic and personal barriers including financial constraints, police skepticism, and fear of retaliation.

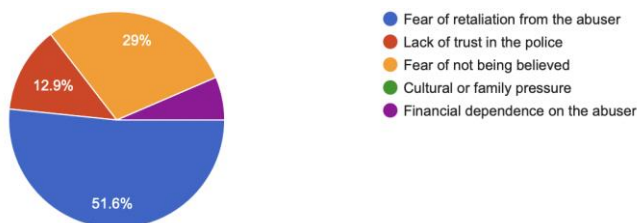


Figure 9: Barriers to seeking police help (Source: Questionnaire Results, 2025)

The findings indicate that public perception of police responses to domestic violence is mixed. While 38.7% believe officers take cases seriously only in severe situations, 32.3% feel police responses are inconsistent, and only 25.8% think officers always take domestic violence cases seriously. A small percentage (3.2%) rarely or never take these cases seriously.

These results suggest that while police forces are seen as responsive in high-risk situations, there are concerns about inconsistencies, lack of urgency in non-physical abuse cases, and gaps in training. Improving police protocols, early intervention strategies, and victim-centered approaches may help build greater trust and ensure all domestic violence cases are taken seriously.

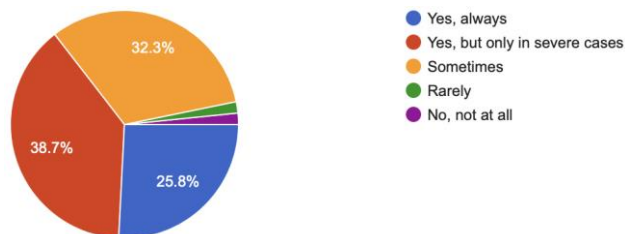


Figure 10: Perceptions of police seriousness in domestic violence cases (Source: Questionnaire Results, 2025)

Most respondents believe that police officers' biases influence their responses to domestic violence incidents to some extent. 45.2% stated that bias affects responses "somewhat", while 14.5% believed it as a significant influence (see figure 11). This suggests that many perceive subjective judgments, stereotypes, or preconceived notions as factors that impact how officers handle domestic violence cases.

Conversely, 25.8% felt that bias does not play a major role, and 14.5% believed there is no influence at all. These findings indicate that while some respondents trust police objectivity, a large proportion remain concerned about potential biases affecting victim treatment, case prioritization, and decision-making processes.

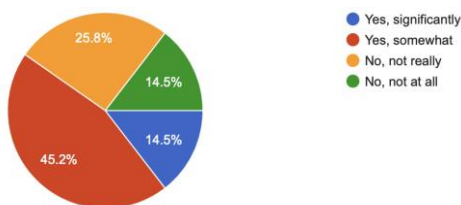


Figure 11: Perceptions of police bias in domestic violence responses (Source: Questionnaire Results, 2025)

Respondents identified several key factors that impact how police officers respond to domestic violence incidents. A lack of training and experience was frequently mentioned, with concerns that young and inexperienced officers may struggle to handle complex cases, particularly those involving coercive control or emotional abuse. Additionally, respondents highlighted police workload and staffing shortages, suggesting that officers may not always have the time or resources to respond effectively. Another recurring theme was officer bias and personal perceptions, with some participants stating that gender, age, and sexual orientation of the victim can affect police attitudes and actions. Furthermore, participants noted that the quality of initial information and evidence collection such as DASH risk assessments, safeguarding concerns, and victim statements can shape how officers proceed with an investigation.

When asked about the police's top priority in responding to a domestic violence call, the overwhelming majority (85.5%) stated that ensuring the immediate safety of the victim should be the primary focus (see figure 12). This highlights the importance of swift intervention to protect victims from further harm, reinforcing the need for risk assessments, emergency safeguarding measures, and appropriate police action upon arrival.

A smaller proportion (9.7%) believed that arresting the alleged perpetrator should be the top priority, indicating that while accountability is important, immediate victim protection is seen as more urgent. Additionally, 3.2% emphasized providing resources and support to the victim, while 1.6% identified evidence collection for prosecution as the key focus. These responses suggest that while legal action and victim support are crucial, public perception favors immediate safety as the foremost concern.

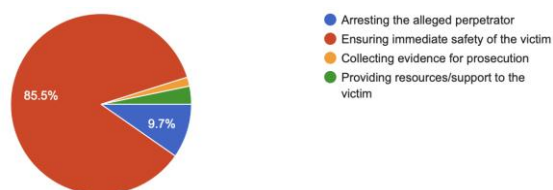


Figure 12: Perceived top priority for police in domestic violence cases (Source: Questionnaire Results,2025)

Responses regarding how often domestic violence perpetrators are arrested when police respond to an incident were varied, reflecting perceptions of inconsistency in police forces. The most common response was “sometimes” (37.1%), followed closely by “rarely” (33.9%),

indicating that many believe arrests do not always occur, even when police are called (see figure 13). This suggests that officers may be using discretion in making arrests or may face barriers such as insufficient evidence, victim withdrawal, or procedural limitations.

In contrast, 17.7% of respondents believed that perpetrators are arrested “most of the time”, and 11.3% felt arrests “always” happen. Notably, 0% of respondents selected “never”, implying that while arrest rates may be inconsistent, complete inaction is not perceived as a widespread issue.

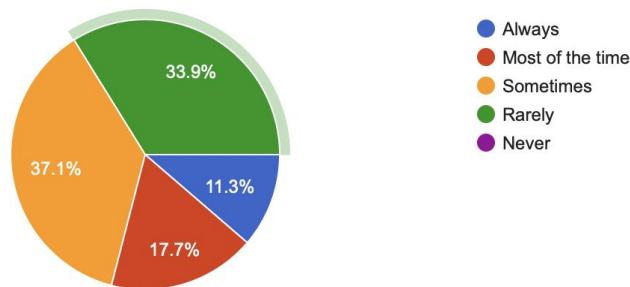


Figure 13: Perceived frequency of domestic violence perpetrator arrests (Source: Questionnaire Results, 2025).

Responses indicate that police involvement does not always guarantee a sense of safety for domestic violence victims. While 45.2% believed victims feel safer “sometimes”, only 17.7% said “most of the time” and 6.5% said “always”. In contrast, 14.5% felt victim “rarely” feel safer, and 16.1% believed they do “not at all” (see figure 14)

These findings suggest that police intervention alone may not be enough to ensure lasting victim safety, likely due to concerns about perpetrator retaliation, lack of follow-up, or inadequate protective measures. Strengthening safeguarding procedures, improving victim support, and ensuring effective follow-up may help enhance victim security after reporting to the police.

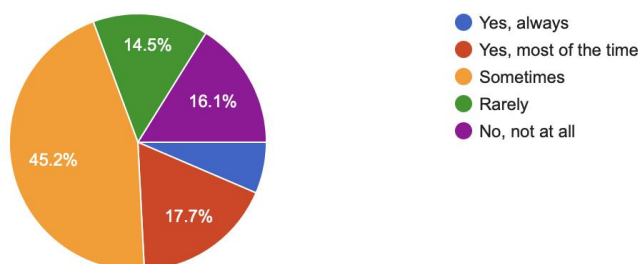


Figure 14: Perceptions of victim safety after police involvement (Source: Questionnaire Results,2025)

Respondents highlighted several key areas for improving police responses to domestic violence. A recurring theme was the need for quicker response times, ensuring that victims receive immediate protection and support. Many also emphasized the importance of better training, particularly in trauma-informed approaches and coercive control, to help officers handle cases with greater sensitivity and understanding. Many highlighted the importance of believing victims, reducing bias, and improving investigation efforts to ensure all cases are taken seriously. Additionally, suggestions included increasing police presence, enhancing coordination with support services, and enforcing stronger consequences for perpetrators. To improve responses, police should focus on faster intervention, better victim support and proactive case management.

When asked whether they had witnessed or experienced a case where a domestic violence victim was not taken seriously by the police, 42.6% responded “yes”, indicating a significant portion of respondents had encountered such situation. In contrast, 50.8% answered “no” while 6.6% preferred not to say.

The findings suggest that while some victims receive proper police attention, a considerable number of respondents have witnessed or experienced police dismissing or not prioritizing domestic violence cases. This highlights the need for greater accountability, improved training, and more consistent responses to ensure all victims are taken seriously and supported.

Reference list

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