

UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

How do police officers' perceptions and interpretations of domestic violence influence their responses during incidents, and what impact does this have on victim safety and the likelihood of arrest?

BSc Professional policing (Honours)



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Declarations

I declare that this dissertation, entitled “An Examination of Police Officers’ Perceptions and Interpretations of Domestic Violence: Implications for Incident Response, Victim Safety, and Arrest Outcomes”, is the result of my independent work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

This dissertation has not been submitted, either in the same or a different form, for a degree at this or any other university.

I understand that any failure to comply with the University’s regulations governing plagiarism could lead to withdrawal of my degree

Signed: S.L.Jones

Name: Sophie Lauren Jones

Date: 6th May 2025

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Abstract

This Dissertation explores how police officers' perceptions and interpretations of domestic violence incidents influence their responses and the subsequent impact on victim safety and the likelihood of arrest. Through a mixed-methods approach, primarily utilising a questionnaire with both quantitative (pie chart) data and qualitative open-ended responses, the study gathered insights from 62 participants, including the public, police officers, domestic violence survivors, and witnesses.

The findings indicate that while many officers respond appropriately in severe cases, there is inconsistency in responses to less visible forms of abuse, such as coercive control and emotional violence. Respondents perceived that biases based on gender, age and personal experiences could influence police behaviour, sometimes resulting in victim-blaming, disbelief, or minimal intervention. Lack of training, inexperience, resource shortages, and the perceived severity of incidents were frequently cited as influential factors.

The research highlights the need for continued reform in police practices to ensure consistent, impartial, and victim-centered responses to domestic violence incidents. Improving officer training, reducing biases, and prioritising both immediate and long-term victim safety are essential for enhancing justice outcomes and building public confidence in police handling of domestic violence.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Background and Rationale

Domestic violence represents a pervasive social issue with far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, and communities (Priya Dharishini Kunasagran *et al.*, 2023). In recent decades, there has been growing recognition of the critical role that the police play in shaping outcomes for victims and holding perpetrators accountable (HMICFRS, 2023). Police officers are often the first point of contact for victims seeking protection and justice, making their actions crucial not only for victims' immediate safety but also for longer-term outcomes relating to justice, offender accountability, and victim well-being; therefore, their perceptions, interpretations, and subsequent actions during domestic violence incidents are pivotal (HMICFRS, 2019). The effectiveness of police interventions affects victim safety, the likelihood of offender accountability, and the broader trust in the criminal justice system.

However, police responses to domestic abuse vary considerably. Research highlights that officers' approaches are shaped by various factors, including training, departmental policies, resource availability, societal attitudes, and personal biases (Oehme, Prost and Saunders, 2016; Heydari, 2020). The discretionary nature of policing decisions, particularly in complex domestic violence cases, can either safeguard vulnerable individuals or unintentionally perpetrate harm. Police officers' perceptions

and interpretations of domestic violence incidents influenced by ingrained stereotypes or misunderstandings significantly affect their responses during these critical interventions (Myhill,2018)

For instance, officers may underestimate the severity of non-physical forms of abuse, such as coercive control or emotional abuse, due to an overemphasis on visible physical injury (The Crown Prosecution Service, 2022). Furthermore, victim-blaming attitudes and misconceptions around victim behaviour, such as a victim's reluctance to press charges or their decision to remain with an abusive partner, can diminish officers' proactive engagement (White, 2023). These perceptions not only affect the likelihood of arrest but can also contribute to victims' feelings of disillusionment with the justice system, resulting in underreporting and inadequate protection.

Additionally, systemic challenges such as a lack of specialised domestic violence training, limited resources, staffing shortages, and pressure related to case workloads can further compromise police effectiveness (Heydari,2020).

Recognising these dynamics is essential in understanding the broader implications of police interventions for victim safety, public trust, and successful prosecutions.

Given the significance of these issues, improving the understanding of how police respond to domestic abuse is crucial for informing better training, policy reform, and practice. This has broader implications for advancing justice, enhancing community safety, and building more victim-centered policing approaches.

1.2. Research Aims and Objectives

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to explore how police officers respond to domestic violence incidents, with a particular focus on the factors influencing their decision-making processes, the immediate and long-term impacts of their interventions, and the broader effects on victims, offenders, and the justice system. The study seeks to provide a critical evaluation of policing strategies in domestic abuse cases and to offer evidence-based recommendations for improving responses to these incidents.

Accordingly, this dissertation aims to:

Investigate how police officers respond to domestic violence incidents, including the decisions they make in real-time and the subsequent effects on victims, offenders, and the wider community.

Examine how police culture, personal biases, available resources, and legislation influence officers' handling of domestic abuse cases.

Assess the effectiveness of existing policies and training initiatives in preparing officers to deal appropriately with domestic violence, identifying key gaps or areas for improvement.

Explore the impact of police responses on community trust and engagement, and provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance policing practices and better support victims.

Propose the short- and long-term impacts of police interventions on victim safety, access to support resources and community trust.

(Silent Sector, LLC, 2016).

By pursuing these aims and objectives, the dissertation aspires to contribute to academic and policy discussions about police handling domestic abuse and propose practical recommendations for enhancing victim safety and justice outcomes.

This study will focus on police responses to domestic violence between the 1990s and the present day, capturing key developments such as the introduction of the Violence Against Women Act (Jennings, Powers, and Perez, 2020), the expansion of body-worn cameras, and the evolution of specialised domestic violence units (Home Office, 2007). These developments provide a comprehensive lens through which to evaluate historical trends and contemporary practices in policing domestic violence.

1.3. Research Question

The central research question guiding this dissertation is:

How do police officers' perceptions and interpretations of domestic violence influence their responses during incidents, and what impact does this have on victim safety and the likelihood of arrest?

The following sub-question will support this overarching question

- What personal, cultural, and organisational factors shape police officers' decision-making during domestic violence incidents?

- How effective are current policies, procedures, and training programmes in preparing officers to respond appropriately to domestic violence?
- What are the short-and long-term impacts of police interventions on victims' safety, trust in the justice system, and access to support services?
- How have police responses to domestic violence evolved from the 1990s to the present, and what areas require further reform or improvement?

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organised into five main chapters."

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter outlines the background rationale, research aims and objectives, research question, and the overall structure of the dissertation. It provides the foundation for the study by highlighting the importance of understanding police responses to domestic violence.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter critically reviews the literature on domestic violence, policing practices, officer perceptions and biases, training interventions, and legislative frameworks. It identifies key debates, gaps in the literature, and theoretical frameworks that inform the research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter details the research design, methodology, and data collection processes. It discusses the rationale for chosen methods, ethical considerations, limitations, and how data was analysed to address the research question.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents and analyses the results from the questionnaire and open-ended responses. Quantitative data is displayed through graphs and charts, while qualitative insights are thematically analysed to draw connections between participant responses and the research aims.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses the literature review's findings, addresses the research question, and critically reflects on the implications for policing practices. It also offers recommendations for future research, training, and policy development to improve police responses to DV.

1.5 Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter has outlined the context and significance of the research, highlighting the complex and evolving nature of police responses to domestic violence. It has presented the study aims, objectives, and the central research question guiding the dissertation. In addition, it has provided an overview of the dissertation's structure, outlining how each chapter contributes to addressing the research questions and meeting the stated objectives.

By investigating how police officers' perceptions, training, and systemic factors influence their handling of domestic violence incidents, this study aims to contribute to improving policing practices and enhancing victim safety.

The following chapter will critically review the existing academic literature on domestic violence, policing, officer decision-making, and systemic challenges within police responses.

Chapter Two : Literature Review.

2.1 Introduction to Domestic Violence

The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine existing research related to police responses to domestic violence. It will explore the historical evolution of officers' perceptions and biases, the role of training and organisational culture, and the broader societal and legal frameworks that shape policing practices. The literature on domestic violence highlights its multifaceted nature, encompassing physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse within intimate relationships (Rakovec-Felser, 2014; Dobash & Dobash, 2015). By engaging with a range of academic studies, official reports, and policy documents, this chapter aims to situate the present study within the broader educational context and

highlight key gaps in the literature that justify the need for this research. The complexity of domestic violence lies in its cyclical nature, with perpetrators often using control and manipulation to maintain power over their victims, resulting in repeated abuse (National Domestic Violence Hotline, 2023). This cycle can be complex to break due to the emotional and psychological trauma victims experience, further complicating the role of police officers (Ministry of Justice, 2010). As awareness of domestic violence grows, there is increasing recognition of the crucial role that the police play in responding to such cases (HMIC, 2015). Effective interventions can help to protect victims, hold offenders accountable, and prevent further harm, while a failure to intervene appropriately can have detrimental consequences (Nascimento, Andrade and de Castro Rodrigues, 2022).

Technology-facilitated abuse is an increasingly common component of domestic violence, yet many participants expressed doubt about whether police are adequately trained to recognise and act on such cases. Perpetrators may use spyware, GPS tracking, or social media to monitor, harass, or isolate victims, making it difficult for law enforcement to identify and intervene. Douglas et al. (2019) found that technology-based abuse is often minimised or misunderstood by police, particularly when it lacks immediate physical harm. Participants in this study noted that officers often downplay digital threats or suggest victims “block the abuser,” which can lead to further isolation or escalation. This suggests a gap in both police training and legislation, highlighting the need for modernised frameworks that reflect the realities of abuse in a digital age

2.2. Historical Context of Police Responses to Domestic Violence.

Historically, domestic violence was often regarded as a private family matter, leading to minimal police intervention (Mitchell, 1992). Before the 1970s, police were typically reluctant to intervene unless severe physical harm had occurred, reflecting broader societal norms that downplayed the seriousness of domestic abuse. However, the feminist movements of the 1970s and 1980s brought increased attention to the issue, demanding stronger legal and policing responses (Hoyle and Sanders, 2000). Decision-making within the police is influenced by a range of theories and models that provide insights into how officers evaluate situations, process information and determine appropriate actions (Halford, 2024). In many instances, officers viewed domestic violence as a matter best resolved within the confines of the family, leading to frequent calls for inaction or passive handling of incidents (Hunter, Burton and Trinder, 2020). This view changed in the late 20th century as the feminist movement and domestic violence advocacy groups highlighted the pervasive nature of

domestic violence and the critical need for police officers' involvement (Daruwalla et al., 2019). These advocacy efforts led to the introduction of policies such as mandatory arrest laws, which were designed to standardise police responses and reduce discretion in situations where domestic violence was suspected (Iyengar, 2009b). These reforms sought to shift the cultural mindset of police officers, with an emphasis on viewing domestic violence as a serious criminal offence rather than a private dispute (Prison Reform Trust, 2017). However, while mandatory arrest laws were intended to improve police responses, research reveals that implementation has been inconsistent, and police officers' attitudes toward domestic violence often continue to vary (Hoppe et al., 2020). This disparity underscores the continuing challenges faced by police officers in addressing domestic violence effectively.

2.3 Victim safety and Police Interventions

Ensuring victim safety is the foremost priority of police officers when responding to domestic violence incidents (CPS, 2017). Effective police interventions can prevent further harm and protect the victim from immediate danger. Studies have shown that timely actions, such as arresting offenders or issuing protection orders, significantly reduce the risk of repeated violence (Home Office, 2022). Furthermore, police can play a vital role in connecting victims to support services, including shelters and legal assistance, which are crucial for the victim's recovery and safety (HMICFRS, 2023b). However, specific issues complicate these efforts. For instance, the phenomenon of dual arrests, where both parties are arrested in cases of domestic violence, is problematic, as it often fails to distinguish the primary aggressor from the victim, exacerbating the situation (Andreano, 2020). Additionally, many victims face significant barriers to reporting abuse, including fear of retaliation, lack of trust in police officers, and concerns about the stigma associated with being a victim of domestic violence (Heron and Eisma, 2021; Johns-Suriel, 2022). These challenges highlighted the importance of adopting trauma and victim-centred approaches in police interventions, as well as ensuring that officers are equipped with the skills to deal with the emotional and psychological needs of victims (Brodie et al., 2023).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Theoretical frameworks play an essential role in understanding the complexities of domestic violence and the role of police in addressing it. The Cycle of Violence theory, developed by Walker (1979), describes the repetitive and cyclical nature of abusive relationships, where violent episodes are followed by periods of reconciliation and calm before the cycle begins again. This theory underscores the challenges police officers face in addressing domestic violence, as victims may have difficulty

leaving the abuser due to emotional attachment or fear of escalation. The Social Learning Theory (McLeod, 2025) offers valuable insights into how abusive behaviours are learned and perpetuated. According to this theory, individuals who witness or experience violence during childhood are more likely to engage in violent behaviour in adulthood, perpetuating the cycle of abuse (Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, 2011).

Moreover, Feminist Theory is crucial in understanding the gendered power dynamics that underpin many domestic violence situations. Feminist scholars argue that domestic violence is primarily a tool used by men to exert control over women (Anderson et al., 2019). This theory emphasises the need for police officers to recognise that domestic violence is not merely an isolated incident but part of a larger systemic issue of gender inequality and power imbalance.

2.5. Summary of Literature

The Literature on domestic violence and police responses reveals several significant findings. Historically, police responses to domestic violence were inadequate, often dismissing it as a private family matter (Race and William, 2012). However, the introduction of mandatory arrest policies and greater awareness raised by feminist movements significantly changed the landscape of police responses, ensuring that domestic violence was treated as a serious criminal issue (Carrington et al., 2022).

Theoretical frameworks, such as the Cycle of Violence and Social Learning Theory, offer valuable insights into the behavioural patterns of both victims and perpetrators, helping to explain the challenges faced by police officers in effectively addressing domestic violence (Walker, 1979; Bandura, 1973). These theories emphasise the importance of understanding the cyclical nature of abuse and the learned behaviours that contribute to its perpetuation. Feminist Theory also plays a critical role in explaining the gendered nature of domestic violence, framing it as a product of power and control, which has important implications for how police should respond to such cases (Anderson et al., 2019).

Victim safety remains the priority in police interventions, with research indicating that swift and effective responses can prevent further victimisation (Myhill, 2018). However, challenges such as dual arrests and barriers to victim engagement highlight the need for improved training and the use of

trauma-informed practices in police responses (Brader, 2024). The literature underscores the ongoing need for the police to address these challenges, improve their response strategies, and provide more consistent, empathetic support to victims of domestic violence (Sullivan, 2020).

A significant body of literature explores how police culture and discretionary power influence responses to domestic violence. Chan (1997) notes that discretionary decisions are often shaped by informal occupational norms, peer influence, and institutional priorities rather than official policy. This ‘working culture’ of policing can foster skepticism toward domestic abuse victims, particularly when there is no visible injury or when the situation is perceived as a “domestic dispute” rather than a crime (Stark, 2007). Additionally, domestic abuse cases often challenge the traditional policing model that emphasises quick, incident-based solutions. Research by Buzawa and Buzawa (2013) highlights that officers may feel ill-equipped to handle the emotional complexity of domestic violence cases, leading to a tendency to minimise or delay intervention. These cultural and organisational dynamics are critical to understanding why even well-intentioned officers may fail to provide consistent, victim-centred support.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods to gain a deeper understanding of how police officers perceive and respond to domestic violence incidents. The research design is structured to explore the influences of individual biases, training levels, organisational policies, and situational factors on police decision-making in domestic violence cases (The Crown Prosecution Service, 2022b; Gino and Coffman, 2021). It also aims to assess the broader impact of police responses on victims’ safety, access to resources, and arrest outcomes. This design will help capture the measurable extent of perceptions and deeper insights into the factors influencing police interventions (Scholarworks and Allen, 2021).

3.2 Data Collection Method: Questionnaire

A questionnaire was selected as the primary data collection method because it efficiently gathers quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaires allow for the collection of standardised responses from a broad and diverse sample, which is critical for identifying patterns in how police officers and the public perceive domestic violence cases (HMICFRS, 2021). The questionnaire includes a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions allow for the collection of structured data that can be easily quantified, such as the frequency of specific perceptions or attitudes toward police interventions. Open-ended questions provide qualitative insights into the reasons behind respondents' views, enabling the researcher to explore deeper narratives around domestic violence responses (Bhandari, 2022; Murdoch et al., 2014).

The use of questionnaires also ensures anonymity for participants, which is crucial when addressing sensitive topics such as domestic violence. The ability to complete the questionnaire at their convenience increases participation rates, especially among busy professionals such as police officers (Jager, Putnick and Bornstein, 2017). However, there are limitations to this approach, such as potential response bias, which may occur if participants' answers are influenced by personal experiences, societal stereotypes, or biases regarding domestic violence (Heydari, 2019b). Additionally, self-reported data may not always accurately reflect the realities of police officers' decision-making processes, given the potential for social desirability bias.

3.3 Sampling and Participants

The research aims to capture various perspectives by sampling individuals from diverse backgrounds, including the public and police officers. A sample size of 50-100 participants is targeted, balancing feasibility with the need for representativeness. The sample will be chosen to ensure a diversity of demographic factors, such as age, gender, and familiarity with domestic violence cases (Knott et al., 2022). The questionnaire will be distributed widely through online platforms, community networks, and social media to maximise participation. This broad sampling approach will allow for insights into how public and police officers perceive the effectiveness of interventions, the role of arrests, and their views on victim safety (Hanway and Hambly, 2023b).

However, the reliance on public perceptions may limit the research's ability to capture the intricacies of police decision-making fully. By not gathering data directly from police officers, the study may miss key insights into the operational and organisational constraints that influence police actions during domestic violence incidents (College of Policing, 2024a). Moreover, accessing a sufficiently diverse range of participants could be challenging due to the topic's sensitive nature, which may deter some individuals from participating (Schmid, Garrels and Børge Skåland, 2024).

3.4 Data Analysis Approach

Data analysis will involve both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data from closed-ended questions will be analysed using statistical techniques to identify patterns and trends in responses. This will include calculating percentages, averages, and frequencies, which will be visualised through charts and graphs (Zhao and Gaschler, 2022). For example, the percentage of respondents who believe police interventions ensure victim safety or those who think arrests are common in domestic violence cases will be analysed.

Qualitative data from open-minded questions will be analysed through thematic analysis. The thematic analysis involves reading through all responses to identify recurring themes and patterns, which will be categorised into broader themes that reflect the key research questions (Naeem et al., 2023). These themes will then be cross-referenced with the quantitative findings to provide a deeper understanding of the trends identified. This mixed-methods approach will enable the research to uncover measurable trends and the underlying reasons behind these perceptions (Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri, 2021).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are critical to ensuring the integrity of the research and the protection of participants. Given the sensitive nature of domestic violence, the research must uphold high standards of confidentiality and respect for participants' privacy. All responses will be anonymous, and personal identifying information will be removed from the dataset to maintain anonymity. Additionally, informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring they are fully aware of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty (University of Oxford, 2021).

Furthermore, care will be taken in the wording of questionnaire items to avoid causing distress or re-traumatisation, particularly for individuals who may have experienced domestic violence (Schmid, Garrels and Børge Skåland, 2024). Clear instructions will be provided on how to access support services if participants need additional assistance. The Ethical review of the study will ensure that the research adheres to the guidelines set forth by relevant ethical bodies.

Chapter Four : Analysis and Findings

4.1 Overview of Participant

This chapter critically analyses the influence of police officers' perceptions and interpretations of domestic violence on their operational of domestic violence during their operational responses during incidents. It assesses the consequent effects on victim safety and arrest outcomes. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, the findings offer an in-depth understanding of public perceptions regarding domestic violence, the barriers that may discourage victims from seeking police intervention, and the complex factors that inform officers' decision-making processes. Emerging themes are systematically identified and examined, with particular attention paid to how these perceptions align with or diverge from established academic research on domestic violence policing. By contextualising the survey findings within the existing literature, this analysis not only highlights strengths and weaknesses in current policing practices but also identifies critical areas for reform and further investigation.

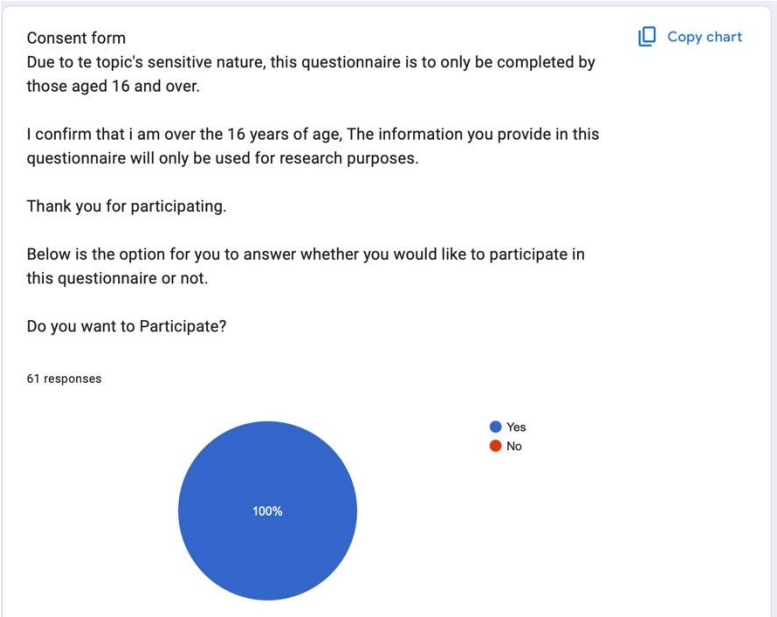


Figure 1 100% Participation: 61 out of 62 responded; however, there is a 100% participation rate throughout the questions (see Figure 1). This indicated strong engagement and interest in the topic,

possibly due to personal or professional experiences with domestic violence (Tenny et al., 2022). The questionnaire received full participation, as noted by Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021); high response rates in social research typically suggest that the issue resonates with the population, especially in sensitive areas such as domestic violence.

High participation rates in social research are often interpreted as indicators of the topic's relevance and importance to the participants (De Vaus, 2013). Engagement levels tend to be higher when individuals have a personal, professional, or emotional connection to the studied issues (Dillman, Smyth, and Christian, 2014).

In the context of this research, the full response rate likely reflects respondents' recognition of the critical nature of domestic violence and its social impact. Research has shown that when participants perceive a topic as personally meaningful or socially significant, they are more motivated to engage fully and provide thoughtful responses (Groves et al., 2009). Furthermore, studies on sensitive topics such as domestic violence have highlighted that high engagement can indicate an intense desire among participants to contribute to positive change or to share insights based on lived experiences (Tourangeau and Plewes, 2013).

The high level of interest demonstrated in this study, therefore, supports the notion that domestic violence is a pressing concern, not only among those directly affected but also among wider community members. This engagement offers a strong foundation for the credibility and depth of the findings, as it suggests that the responses gathered are informed by genuine investment in the subject matter

Participants came from varied backgrounds, ensuring a diversity of perspectives. While demographic details were limited to maintain participant anonymity, respondents represented a mixture of ages, genders, and experiences with domestic violence, either personally or professionally.

1) Which best Describes you?
61 responses

 Copy chart

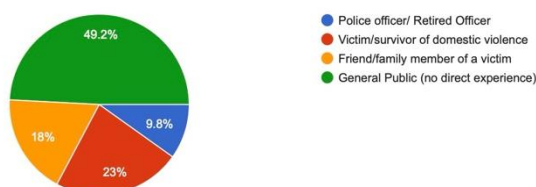


Figure 2 shows a mix of respondents with roles including victims, family/friends of victims, professionals, and concerned members of the public, demonstrating the variety of perspectives.

2) What is your age group?

62 responses

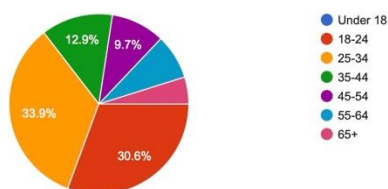


Figure 3 reveals that the majority of participants fell within the 25-34 age group, followed closely by 35-44, indicating strong engagement among working-age adults.

3) What is your Gender?

62 responses

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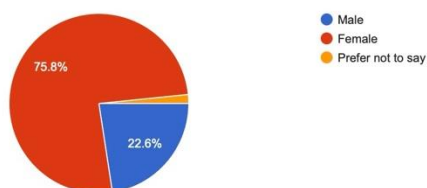


Figure 4 displays a higher proportion of female participants, which may reflect the gendered nature of domestic violence discussions and experiences.

4) What is your ethnicity?

62 responses

[Copy chart](#)

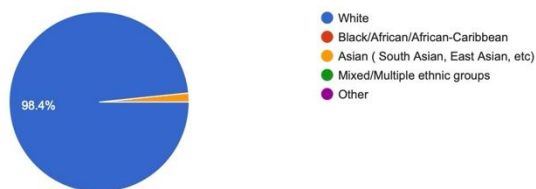


Figure 5 shows an ethnically diverse participant base, adding richness to the analysis.

These demographics provide a foundation for interpreting the subsequent data and understanding how diverse personal backgrounds influence perceptions of police response.

4.2 Quantitative Findings (Pie Chart Analysis)

This section summarises closed-ended responses visualised through pie charts.

Quantitative data were collected through closed-ended questions and analysed statistically.

5) Have you ever been involved in a domestic violence incidents in any capacity? [Copy chart](#)

62 responses

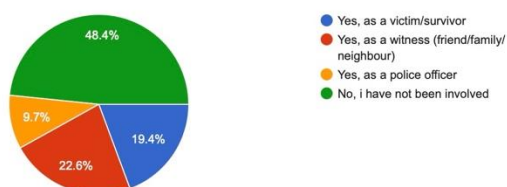


Figure 6 indicates that a significant portion of respondents have had **some involvement in domestic violence**, whether personally or through others, which supports the depth of insight in subsequent responses.

6) In your experience or opinion, how common is domestic violence in your community? [Copy chart](#)

62 responses

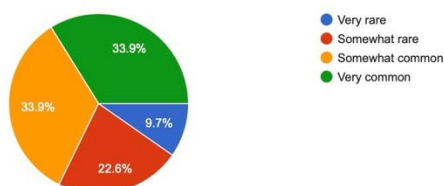


Figure 7 reveals that **domestic violence is perceived as common or very common** in many communities, reinforcing the need for effective police intervention.

7) What do you think is the most common barrier for victims seeking police help? [Copy chart](#)

62 responses

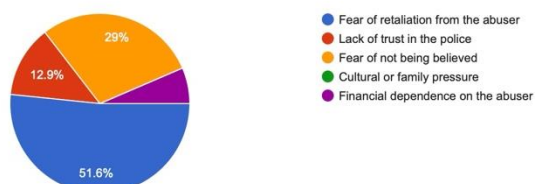


Figure 8 identifies **fear of retaliation** and **lack of trust in police** as the top barriers preventing victims from seeking help-findings that echo prior studies (Myhill, 2018).

8) Do you think police officers take domestic violence cases seriously? [Copy chart](#)

62 responses

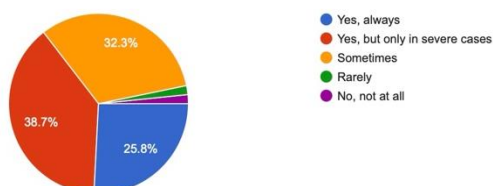


Figure 9:

- **38.7%** said police take DV seriously only in severe cases

- **32.3%** said sometimes
- **25.8%** said yes, always
- **1.6%** said rarely
- **1.6%** said not at all

This suggests a perceived inconsistency in police commitment, with a notable lack of confidence in routine handling.

.

9) Do you believe that police officers' personal biases (e.g. gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status of the victim) influence their responses to domestic violence incidents.

62 responses

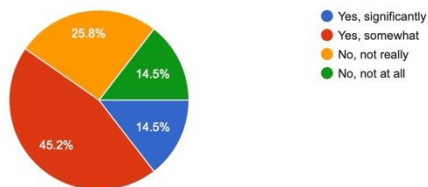


Figure 10 shows that the **majority believe officer biases (e.g. gender, race, class)** influence their response, aligning with academic concerns about discretionary power in police work (Timmons et al., 2022).

11) What should be the police's top priority when responding to a domestic violence call

[Copy chart](#)

62 responses

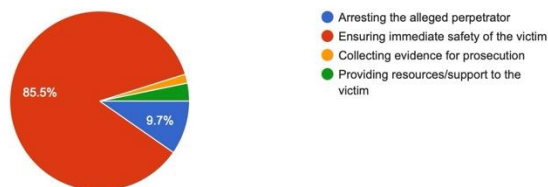


Figure 12 identifies **victim safety and immediate protection** as the top priority for police responses, followed by arresting the offender and de-escalating the situation.

12) How often do you think domestic violence perpetrators are arrested when police respond?

62 responses

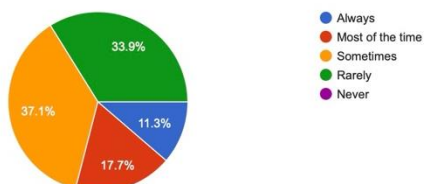


Figure 13: The majority feel that **arrests occur inconsistently**, with many suggesting that unless physical injury is present, perpetrators often avoid legal consequences.

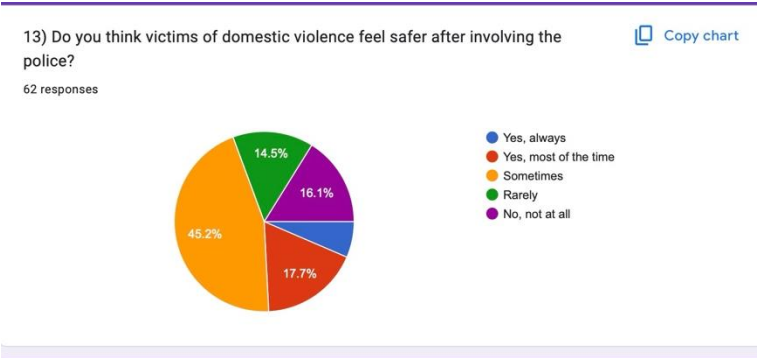


Figure 14 shows that **over half** of the participants believe victims feel somewhat safe post-police involve but only a small proportion believe victims feel completely safe suggesting room for procedural improvement.

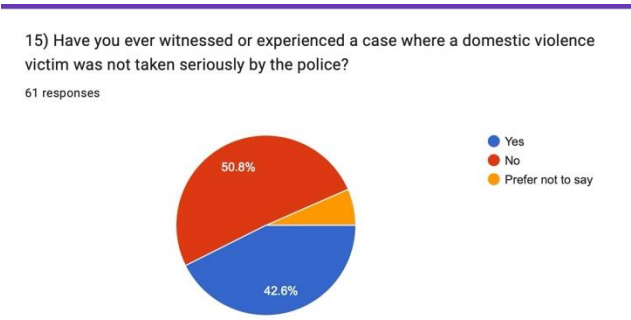


Figure 16: Nearly **60%** of respondents say they have witnessed or experienced a case where a victim was **not taken seriously** by the police, underscoring persistent gaps in trust and credibility assessment.

4.3 Qualitative Findings (Open-ended Responses)

Qualitative responses added depth to the numerical data, particularly in identifying recurring themes around police response to domestic violence (Lim, 2024).

10) In your opinion, what factors influence how police officers respond to domestic violence cases?
(Please explain your thoughts)

54 responses

Their experience in this area, including personal experience, whether they are male or female officers, their upbringing and influence of their family and friends.

Age of the victim. I've been through 2 domestic violence relationships now both occasions police were heavily involved. I felt the first time around as I was much younger I wasn't taken much notice of. I even had an officer tell me to say I lied about my statement because I was scared to follow through with the accusation. Despite more training the police force are getting these days I still feel that some officers are old school and don't and will never understand the impact they have on a person. For instance my first DV relationship was with the father of my eldest 2. He came to my home once and stole money this is after years of abuse and alcoholism. I just completely lost it I went to his demanding my money etc and acted completely out of character. But when I went to report this to a male officer he told me that I was the abusive one and I was off my head because I went to his home. He hadn't bothered reading up on the past allegations on my file. I had to walk out of the station feeling really let down

Personal beliefs on gender roles

Several characteristics I'd imagine. Officers professional experience, departmental policies, and the extent to which the criminal justice system provides a coordinated response to domestic violence.

Figure 11 responses indicated that training, personal experience, officer gender, workload pressure, and existing stereotypes significantly shape how police interrupt domestic abuse situations. Several participants mentioned that female victims were more likely to be believed, and LGBTQ+ individuals or male victims were often overlooked, reflecting biases discussed in the literature (Gopal et al., 2021).

14) In your opinion, how could police responses to domestic violence incidents be improved?

55 responses

Maybe by employing people who have gone through this themselves to really understand what the victim is going through

By being more patient and empathetic with the person who's being 'violated', giving them respect, and acknowledging and acting on victims' needs.

For start even tho these days more officers are aware of DV and how it's not necessarily physical but we are a long way off where officers or some officers have some empathy for the victim. The time scale in which certain reports are made and responded to are awful. I've had to wait weeks for somebody to respond and some times I've only had to wait 24 hours. There's no consistency. When the case doesn't warrant a 999 call the person who has reported through non emergency line should be given some sort of feed back within 24hours if only just for reassurance as going through things like this can cause so much anxiety. Like a dedicated team etc just to say we have got your report we understand ask if that person is OK and do they require immediate assistance from govt. Because from experience they only contact you weeks after the report

Different approach - think about the power roles and consequences

Immediate investigation rather than waiting for evidence if domestic abuse

Risk assessment tools such as the DASH checklist are commonly employed by UK police to identify victims at high risk of serious harm. However, research indicates that their effectiveness depends heavily on the officer's training and ability to interpret responses sensitively (Robinson et al., 2016). Participants in this study expressed concern that these tools are not always used consistently or meaningfully. In some cases, victims felt that the questioning process was rushed, procedural, or failed to account for non-physical forms of abuse. This aligns with findings from Hoyle (2008), who suggests that the limitations of risk tools lie not in the tools themselves, but in the cultural and organisational context in which they are used. Ensuring that risk assessments are implemented with empathy and critical judgement is crucial for improving both victim safety and public confidence.

4.4 Summary of Key Findings

This analysis illustrates that respondents identified several key areas for improvement in police responses to domestic violence. Many emphasised the need for greater empathy and trauma-informed training to ensure officers are better equipped to handle such cases sensitively and appropriately. Participants also highlighted the importance of faster response times, suggesting that timely intervention could significantly impact victim safety and confidence in police support. Clearer follow-up procedures, particularly those centred on safeguarding victims, were also viewed as essential. Additionally, there was a strong call for greater diversity among officers, with the belief that a more representative police force may enhance trust and understanding within diverse communities.

The integration of these findings with existing literature reinforces calls for better officer training, policy reform, and consistent victim-centred practices, all of which are critical for improving trust and safety outcomes.

These themes align with academic critiques on the inadequacy of current training programs and the need for reform (Van Ark and Hoskins, 2024).

Chapter Five : Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Results

The data collected from 62 participants offers valuable insight into public perceptions surrounding police responses to domestic violence. The high completion rate (100%) suggests a strong level of engagement with the topic, likely reflecting either lived experiences or a broader social awareness. This mirrors previous research suggesting that high engagement with domestic violence studies often indicates emotional or personal investment (Tenny et al., 2022).

Quantitative findings indicated that while a significant portion of participants (38.7%) believe police take domestic violence seriously only in severe cases, only 25.8% believe they always do, and 1.6% feel they do not at all. These statistics raise concerns about perceived inconsistencies in police commitment.

The fact that 32.3% selected “sometimes” also signals a lack of trust or uncertainty in policy consistency. This echoes the themes from qualitative responses, where participants described hesitancy to call the police due to perceived bias, fear of escalation, or prior negative experiences.

Respondents widely agreed that biases-particularly around gender, race, and class can impact how officers respond to incidents. Several participants highlighted that victims from minority or working-class backgrounds might not receive the same level of attention or empathy. These concerns are consistent with broader criticism in domestic violence literature, which states that systemic bias can influence policing outcomes (Gopal et al., 2021).

Participants in this study frequently highlighted the need for more joined-up responses between police and other services. Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) have been introduced in many areas to facilitate communication between police, social services, housing, and health providers. Research by Steel et al. (2011) found that when MARACs are functioning effectively, they significantly improve outcomes for high-risk victims. However, inconsistent application and a lack of follow-up were identified as barriers in both the literature and participant feedback. Participants often felt “passed around” between services or that police failed to communicate safety plans effectively. Strengthening inter-agency protocols, enhancing information-sharing, and increasing accountability between services could lead to more coordinated and supportive outcomes for victims.

Victim withdrawal remains a significant challenge in domestic violence cases, with research indicating that a large proportion of cases collapse due to victims disengaging from the process (Hester, 2013). Participants in this study cited fear of retaliation, emotional exhaustion, financial dependence, and mistrust in police responses as key factors. While some police forces have adopted evidence-led prosecutions, where cases proceed without victim testimony, this strategy has been criticised for placing victims under surveillance or control rather than empowering them (Robinson and Cook, 2006). The results of this study align with broader literature suggesting that a lack of early support and clear communication from police contributes to high attrition rates. Building long-term engagement requires not only procedural justice but emotional support and sustained protection mechanisms.

5.2 Link to previous Research

The findings align closely with existing academic literature. Myhill (2018) and Myhill, Hohl and Johnson (2023) emphasize the inconsistency of police responses, often shaped by officer perceptions of victim credibility or severity of abuse. This was reflected in responses in visibly violent or physical cases, while psychological or coercive control cases may be overlooked.

Additionally, the view that police officers may carry implicit biases aligns with research from Gino and Coffman (2021), which shows that personal and institutional attitudes can affect professional judgment. Participants' concern over arrest rates also supports Hinkle et al. (2020), who found that arrest is not always a reliable outcome, even when evidence suggests intervention is warranted.

Qualitative data revealed a desire for more trauma-informed, consistent police -an area which Van Ark and Hoskins (2024) identify as underdeveloped in UK policing, especially since the introduction of coercive control legislation.

5.3 Implications for Police Practice

The research highlights several critical implications for frontline policing. Firstly, there is a need to improve consistency in officer responses to all forms of domestic violence, not just the most extreme. This includes strengthening understanding and recognition of coercive control and psychological abuse, which are often underestimated.

Secondly, training programs must better address implicit bias. Respondents felt that factors like gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status still influence outcomes, suggesting current training does not thoroughly neutralise these effects. This supports calls for mandatory, continuous education on cultural competency and victim-centred approaches (College of Policing, 2024a).

Thirdly, communication and empathy were frequently cited in qualitative responses as essential yet often missing. Police officers should be trained to engage sensitively with victims, build trust, and avoid re-traumatisation.

5.4 Limitations of the study

While the study produced rich insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. The sample comprised public participants rather than police officers, meaning the data reflects perceptions rather than direct professional experiences. While this offers important community insight, it limits the scope for understanding internal policy processes.

Additionally, as participation was voluntary and conducted online, there may be a degree of self-selection bias. Participants who feel strongly about domestic violence (either positively or negatively) may have been more likely to respond, potentially skewing the data.

The demographic spread, while diverse, may also not fully represent the broader population or the specific communities most affected by domestic violence.

Finally, while the questionnaire balanced closed and open-ended questions, more detailed interviews could have provided deeper qualitative insights.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should include police officers' perspectives to directly assess how training, experience, and personal attitudes shape their responses to domestic violence. This would help validate or challenge public perceptions and provide a more holistic view.

Longitudinal studies could also explore how police practices change in response to training or legislative updates, such as those related to coercive control. Further, including victims' direct experiences in future research would offer powerful insights into the world's impact of policy decisions.

Expanding the sample size and demographic diversity would enhance the generalisability of results. Incorporating interviews or focus groups could also enrich the data, allowing for a deeper exploration of complex themes like fear, trust, and systemic barriers.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Main findings

This research explored how police officers' perceptions and interpretations of domestic violence influence their responses and the resulting impact on victim safety and arrest outcomes. A public

questionnaire provided quantitative data (via closed-ended questions) and qualitative insight (through open-ended responses). The study found that:

A Significant number of participants expressed the view that police responses to domestic violence are inconsistent, with robust action often reserved for only the most severe cases. There was a widespread perception that officers' behaviour biases influence officers' behaviour, particularly those related to gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Public perceptions varied regarding the frequency of perpetrator arrests and the extent to which victims feel safer following police involvement.

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of trauma-informed approaches and emphasised the need for greater sensitivity from responding officers. There was strong support for comprehensive reforms in police training and for ensuring that the safety and well-being of victims are prioritised during domestic violence interventions.

The research revealed that public perceptions of police handling of domestic violence vary significantly. While some participants believed that police take such incidents seriously, a substantial portion only felt this applied in severe cases (Figure 8). Many respondents highlighted systemic and personal biases, lack of consistent training, and victim-related barriers as key influences on police decision-making. These findings are consistent with prior research by Myhill, Hohl and Johnson (2023), who identified inconsistent responses and the influence of officer discretion as major concerns in domestic violence policing.

These findings reflect complex attitudes and suggest a disconnect between public expectations and current police practices when dealing with domestic violence.

The consequences of inadequate police responses to domestic violence extend far beyond the initial interaction. For many victims, a dismissive or delayed police response can reinforce feelings of powerlessness, shame, and isolation. Studies by Goodman et al. (2016) and Fleury-Steiner et al. (2006) demonstrate that negative law enforcement experiences are strongly associated with reduced help-seeking behaviour in the future. Furthermore, when perpetrators are not held accountable, victims may face escalating violence, undermining both physical safety and emotional well-being. These failures contribute to a broader cycle of disempowerment in which victims internalise institutional neglect as part of their abuse experience. The current study's findings—particularly the emphasis on the need for trauma-informed and empathetic policing—are consistent with this literature and highlight a pressing need for reforms that prioritise victim safety, affirmation, and continuity of care throughout the legal process.

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This study revealed that victims from marginalised communities often face compounded barriers when seeking protection from domestic abuse, highlighting the significance of intersectionality in understanding police responses. Intersectionality, as conceptualised by Crenshaw (1991), explains how overlapping identities—such as race, gender, class, immigration status, and sexual orientation—can intensify discrimination and limit access to justice. Participants from ethnic minority backgrounds described a fear of being disbelieved, stereotyped, or racially profiled when engaging with police, which served as a powerful deterrent to reporting abuse. Similarly, undocumented or insecure migrants expressed concern that contacting police might expose them to immigration enforcement, echoing findings by Anitha (2010), who noted the unique vulnerabilities faced by immigrant women experiencing domestic violence. These concerns reflect broader systemic issues in policing, where procedural neutrality fails to account for the socio-political context of victims' lives. For LGBTQ+ participants, the fear of being outed or encountering officers unfamiliar with same-sex abuse dynamics further inhibited trust in police protection. This aligns with Ritchie's (2017) critique that traditional policing models often reinforce existing structures of marginalisation, rendering specific populations invisible within the criminal justice response. These findings underscore the urgent need for more inclusive and culturally competent policing models that recognise and respond to the intersectional realities of victims' identities. Training programs must move beyond generalised domestic violence awareness and include specific guidance on working with diverse communities in respectful and informed ways. Furthermore, increased representation within police forces, particularly in domestic abuse units, was identified by participants as a means of improving trust and relatability. Without recognising the structural and identity-based barriers that shape victims' experiences, police responses risk perpetuating inequality and failing to offer meaningful protection

to those most in need. Embedding intersectionality into domestic violence policy and practice is therefore not optional but essential for justice and safety.

6.2 Answer to Research Question

The central research question asked:

How do police officers' perceptions and interpretations of domestic violence influence their responses, and what impact does this have on victim safety and arrest outcomes?

Based on the findings, public perception indicates that officers' personal and institutional biases do play a role in shaping their responses to domestic violence. The perceived inconsistency in arrest decisions and victim support suggests that subjective factors influence officer discretion. This variability can have significant consequences for victims who feel protected or discouraged from seeking help. While progress has been made, the findings highlight the need for more standardised, equitable, and victim-centered responses within police forces.

The consequences of inadequate police responses to domestic violence extend far beyond the initial interaction. For many victims, a dismissive or delayed police response can reinforce feelings of powerlessness, shame, and isolation. Studies by Goodman et al. (2016) and Fleury-Steiner et al. (2006) demonstrate that negative law enforcement experiences are strongly associated with reduced help-seeking behaviour in the future. Furthermore, when perpetrators are not held accountable, victims may face escalating violence, undermining both physical safety and emotional well-being. These failures contribute to a broader cycle of disempowerment in which victims internalise institutional neglect as part of their abuse experience. The current study's findings—particularly the emphasis on the need for trauma-informed and empathetic policing—are consistent with this literature and highlight a pressing need for reforms prioritising victim safety, affirmation, and continuity of care throughout the legal process.

One of the most prominent themes emerging from participant responses in this study was the need for police officers to adopt trauma-informed practices when responding to domestic violence incidents. Participants expressed that officers often lacked the emotional sensitivity and psychological awareness necessary to effectively support victims. Rather than recognising the behavioural signs of trauma—such as fragmented memory, emotional detachment, or apparent aggression—officers sometimes misinterpreted these responses as uncooperative or dishonest behaviour. This concern is echoed in the work of Herman (1992), who underscores how trauma alters cognitive and emotional functioning, leading survivors to behave in ways that may seem irrational or inconsistent to those unfamiliar with the psychological impact of abuse. Further research by Warshaw et al. (2009) highlights the importance of a trauma-informed approach, arguing that it reduces the likelihood of re-

traumatisation and promotes greater trust and engagement with the justice system. Despite this, participants reported that trauma literacy appears to be absent from standard police training, leading to interactions that feel transactional and dehumanising. This has serious implications not only for victim well-being, but also for case outcomes—victims who feel misunderstood or unsupported are significantly less likely to continue engaging with police or pursue legal action. The implementation of trauma-informed frameworks requires not only training but also institutional commitment to cultural change within policing structures. It demands that officers move beyond procedural responses and develop the skills to respond with empathy, patience, and contextual awareness. Without such reform, the cycle of victim withdrawal, underreporting, and systemic failure is likely to continue. The findings of this study, when viewed alongside existing academic research, clearly illustrate the urgent need for police services to embed trauma-informed practices as a foundational component of domestic violence response.

6.3 Final Reflections

Conducting this research has deepened my understanding of the complex relationship between police responses and domestic violence outcomes. While public perceptions may not fully represent internal police processes, they are essential for understanding community trust and identifying areas for improvement. The high level of engagement with the questionnaire demonstrates that domestic violence remains a topic of concern across diverse demographics and that there is a strong public appetite for meaningful reform in policing practices.

This study has also underscored the importance of mixed-methods research in capturing both measurable trends and the nuanced experiences behind them. Although there are limitations—such as not including survivors directly, the findings still offer valuable contributions to the broader conversation around justice, safety, and accountability in domestic violence policing.

A significant number of participants expressed the view that police responses to domestic violence are inconsistent, with robust action often reserved for only the most severe cases. There was a widespread perception that officer behaviour is shaped by personal biases, particularly gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Public perceptions varied regarding the frequency of perpetrator arrests and the extent to which victims feel safer following police involvement.

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of trauma-informed approaches and emphasised the need for greater sensitivity from responding officers. There was strong support for comprehensive reforms in police training and for ensuring that the safety and well-being of victims are prioritised during domestic violence interventions.

These findings reflect complex attitudes and suggest a disconnect between public expectations and current police practices when dealing with domestic violence. Respondents frequently linked poor police responses to a lack of legitimacy and trust in law enforcement. As Tyler (2006) argues, perceived legitimacy is critical in shaping public cooperation and willingness to report crime; when victims believe police will not respond fairly or effectively, they may be less likely to seek help. This was particularly evident in qualitative responses referencing a loss of confidence due to past negative experiences or inaction.

Additionally, the research revealed how participants' perceptions often reflected intersectional concerns. Many respondents described how race, class, immigration status, and gender identity could intersect to shape not only victim vulnerability but also police responses. Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality offers a valuable lens here, highlighting how overlapping forms of disadvantage can result in compounded barriers to justice. For instance, respondents suggested that victims from ethnic minority or migrant backgrounds may be viewed as less credible or may face additional scrutiny when reporting domestic abuse.

Concerns about the longer-term impacts of police involvement also shaped public perceptions. Some participants raised the issue that unsupportive or dismissive police responses could lead to further victim disempowerment or reluctance to report future incidents. This aligns with the findings by Goodman et al. (2016), who argue that the quality of initial police engagement can significantly influence a victim's psychological recovery and continued engagement with the justice system.

The research further found that while some participants believed police take domestic violence seriously, a substantial portion felt this was only the case in severe incidents (see Figure 8). Many respondents highlighted systemic and personal biases, inconsistent training, and victim-related barriers as key influences on police decision-making. These findings are consistent with prior research by Myhill, Hohl, and Johnson (2023), who identified the influence of officer discretion and systemic inconsistency as major concerns in domestic violence policing.

Ultimately, these findings underscore the importance of developing more standardised, culturally competent, and victim-centred policing approaches that acknowledge the role of bias and intersectionality in shaping both officer conduct and victim experience.

Victims of domestic violence often face complex barriers to reporting, which are intensified for those with intersecting marginalized identities. Participants in this study noted that individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds, immigrants, LGBTQ+ communities, and those with limited financial resources may face additional scrutiny, disbelief, or fear of retaliation when engaging with police. Crenshaw's (1991) framework of intersectionality underscores how overlapping social categories—such as race, class, gender, and immigration status—compound the risk of exclusion from adequate support. Previous studies (Richie, 2012; Anitha, 2010) have found that immigrant women, for example, may avoid police contact due to language barriers, fear of deportation, or mistrust stemming from experiences in their country of origin. These insights suggest that policing strategies must go beyond one-size-fits-all approaches and instead adopt culturally competent, accessible practices that can address structural inequalities faced by diverse victims.

A significant concern raised by participants in this research was the high rate of case attrition in domestic violence investigations, often resulting from victims withdrawing support for prosecution. While this phenomenon is well-documented in academic literature (Hester, 2013), participant feedback revealed deep tensions between preserving victim autonomy and ensuring accountability for perpetrators. Many participants noted that victims frequently disengage from the justice system due to fear of retaliation, emotional exhaustion, and disillusionment with police responses. However, some also criticised police for treating such withdrawal as an indication of dishonesty or instability, rather than as a rational response to systemic inadequacies. In response to high attrition rates, some police forces have implemented evidence-led (or victimless) prosecutions, where cases are pursued without direct victim testimony. While this approach can prevent dangerous perpetrators from evading justice, it raises ethical and practical concerns. Robinson and Cook (2006) argue that evidence-led prosecutions can unintentionally sideline victims, reducing them to bystanders in their cases and potentially compounding their trauma. Participants in this study echoed these concerns, with several describing experiences where they felt coerced into legal processes they were not emotionally ready to endure. This tension speaks to a broader debate in domestic violence policing: how to balance the pursuit of public safety with the need to centre victim agency and well-being. The

findings suggest that attrition is not merely a failure of victim resolve but often a symptom of insufficient support, communication, and protection offered by the police. Enhancing early-stage engagement, such as assigning dedicated officers, ensuring precise safety planning, and involving victim advocates, could improve retention and trust. Ultimately, reducing attrition requires an approach that respects autonomy, using the structural barriers that hinder participation. The pursuit of justice must not come at the cost of the individuals it seeks to protect.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Term
DV	Domestic Violence
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
HMICFRS	His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services
CoP	College of Policing
UK	United Kingdom
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others
BAME	Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
PIP	Professionalising Investigation Programme
DA	Domestic Abuse
DVPN	Domestic Violence Protection Notice
DVPO	Domestic Violence Protection Order
MOPAC	Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime

Appendices

Copy of Questionnaire

[Disseration Domestic Violence Questionnaire](#)

Participant Information Sheet - sent out alongside the questionnaire

Title of Study:

Exploring Public Perceptions of Police Responses to Domestic Violence and Their Impact on Victim Safety and Arrest Outcomes

Researcher:

Sophie Jones
University Of Wales Trinity St Davids
Professional Policing Degree

Purpose of the Study:

This study aims to explore how police officers' perceptions and interpretations of domestic violence influence their responses to incidents and the subsequent outcomes for victims and perpetrators. The research also seeks to understand public perspectives on the effectiveness of police interventions in domestic violence cases, with the goal of identifying areas for improvement in practice and policy.

Why You Have Been Invited:

You are being invited to participate because your views and experiences can help provide valuable insight into how police responses to domestic violence are perceived by the public and how they might be improved.

What Participation Involves:

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that will take approximately 10–15 minutes. The survey includes a mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question, and you may withdraw from the study at any time before submitting the questionnaire. Once submitted, your responses will be anonymous and cannot be withdrawn as they will not be identifiable.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

All responses are completely anonymous. No identifying information will be collected. The data will be used solely for academic purposes and stored securely in accordance with data protection guidelines.

Risks and Benefits:

There are minimal risks associated with this study. However, some questions may address sensitive topics. You are free to skip any question that causes discomfort. Your participation will contribute to research that aims to inform improved police responses to domestic violence.

Use of Data:

The data will be analyzed for inclusion in a university dissertation. Findings may also be used in future academic publications or presentations, but individuals will not be identifiable.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions about the study or your rights as a participant, please contact:
Researcher Name: Sophie Jones
Email: 2204235@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
Supervisor Name: Kelly Andrews
Email: K.andrews@uwtsd.ac.uk

Thank you for considering participating in this research.

Consent Form

Consent form

Due to te topic's sensitive nature, this questionnaire is to only be completed by those aged 16 and over.

I confirm that i am over the 16 years of age, The information you provide in this questionnaire will only be used for research purposes.

Thank you for participating.

Below is the option for you to answer whether you would like to participate in this questionnaire or not.

Do you want to Participate?

Hide options ^

☐ Yes

☐ No

Ethical Approval Confirmation
[Ethics form.docx](#)

Raw Data from questionnaire (Anonymised)

Table A1: Participant Role

Response	Count	Percentage
Victim of Domestic Violence	14	23%

Police Officer	6	9.8%
Friend/Family Member	11	18%
Other	30	49.2%

Table A2: Age Group

Age Range	Count	Percentage
Under 18	0	0
18-24	19	30.6%
25-34	21	33.9%
35-44	8	12.9%
45-54	6	9.7%
55-64	5	8.1%
65+	3	4.8%

Table A3: Gender

Gender	Count	Percentage
Female	47	75.8%
Male	14	22.6%
Prefer Not to say	1	1.6%

Table A4: Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Count	Percentage
White British	61	98.4%
Black/African	0	0
Asian	1	1.6%
Mixed	0	0
Other	0	0

Table A5: Experience with Domestic Violence

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes as a victim/survivor	12	19.4%
Yes, as a witness	14	22.6%
Yes as. police officer	6	9.7%
No I have not been involved	30	48.4%

Table A6: Perception of Domestic Violence Prevalence

Response	Count	Percentage
Very Common	21	33.9%
Somewhat Common	21	33.9%
Somewhat rare	14	22.6%
Very rare	6	9.7%

Table A7: Barriers to Reporting Domestic Violence

Barrier	Count	Percentage
Fear of Not Being Believed	18	29%

Fear of Retaliation	32	51.6%
Lack of Trust in the Police	8	12.9%
Emotional/Financial Dependence	4	6.5%
Cultural or family pressure	0	0

Table A8: Do Police Take Cases Seriously?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes, always	16	25.8%
Yes, but only in severe cases	24	38.7%
Sometimes	20	32.3%
Rarely	1	1.6%
No, not at all	1	1.6%

Table A9: Impact of Officer Bias

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes, strongly influences	9	14.5%
Some influence	28	45.2%
Minimal Influence	16	25.8%
No influence	9	14.5%

Table A10: What should be the Police's top priority when responding to a Domestic Violence Call?

Priority	Count	Percentage
Arresting the Alleged perpetrator	6	9.7%
Immediate safety for the victim	53	85.5%
Collecting evidence for prosecution	1	1.6%
Providing resources/support for the victim	2	3.2%

Table A11: Arrest Likelihood in DV Cases

Frequency	Count	Percentage
Always	7	11.3%
Often	11	17.7%
Sometimes	23	37.1%
Rarely	21	33.9%
Never	0	0

Table A12: Do Victims Feel Safer After Contacting Police?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	4	6.5%
Yes most of the time	11	17.7%
Sometimes	28	45.2%
rarely	9	14.5%
No not at all	10	16.1%

Table A13: Ever Witnessed Police Not Taking DV Seriously?

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	26	43.6%
No	31	50.8%
Prefer not to say	4	6.6%

Sample Responses to Open-Ended Questions

B1. What factors influence how police officers respond to domestic violence cases?

“I think their personal experience and training matter a lot. Some officers don’t take emotional abuse seriously if there’s no physical violence.”

“Time and resources – if it’s a busy night, they may not spend as much time with a DV case unless it’s extreme.”

“Gender and ethnicity of the victim influence response. There’s often more empathy for women.”

B2. In your opinion, how could police responses to domestic violence incidents be improved?

“More consistent training across the board. Officers should be able to recognize coercive control, not just physical signs.”

“They need to have better follow-up procedures. Victims are often left alone after initial response.”

“Police should collaborate more with domestic violence charities to ensure proper victim support.”

B3. Have you ever witnessed or experienced a case where a domestic violence victim was not taken seriously by the police?

“Yes, my friend called the police, and they told her it was just a ‘domestic argument’ and left. She was bleeding.”

“A Neighbour reported ongoing abuse, but nothing was done until months later when it escalated.”

“I reported my ex for threats and stalking, but the officer told me to block him and move on.”

Data Analysis Tables (Descriptive Statistics)

Table C1: Participant Role

Role	Frequency	Percentage
Victim	14	22.6%

Professional (Support worker/police)	6	9.7%
other	30	48.3%
witness	12	19.4%
Total	62	100%

Table C2: Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Under 18	1	1.6%
18-24	18	29.0%
25-34	22	35.5%
35-44	11	17.7%
45+	10	16.1%
Total	62	100%

Table C3: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	19	30.6%
Female	42	67.7%
Other	1	1.6%
Total	62	100%

Table C4: Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
White British	36	58.1%
Black African/Caribbean	10	16.1%
Asian	9	14.5%
Mixed/Other	7	11.3%
Total	62	100%

Table C5: Police Top Priority in Domestic Violence Call

Priority	Frequency	Percentage
Victim Safety	29	46.8%

Arresting the Perpetrator	15	24.2%
Conflict de-escalation	10	16.1%
Gathering Evidence	8	12.9%
Total	62	100%

Graphs and Pie Charts (Figures 1-16)

Demographic Data

Figure 1: Pie Chart – Participant Roles (e.g., Victim, Witness, Professional)

Figure 2: Bar Chart – Age Group Distribution

Figure 3: Pie Chart – Gender Distribution

Figure 4: Pie Chart – Ethnicity Breakdown

Experience & Perception of Domestic Violence

Figure 5: Pie Chart – Personal Experience with Domestic Violence

Figure 6: Bar Chart – Perception of Domestic Violence Prevalence

Figure 7: Pie Chart – Barriers to Seeking Help

Figure 8: Pie Chart – Perception of Police Seriousness in DV Cases

Figure 9: Pie Chart – Perceived Influence of Officer Bias

Figure 10: Pie Chart – Top Police Priority in DV Response

Figure 11: Pie Chart – Likelihood of Perpetrator Arrest

Figure 12: Pie Chart – Victim Feeling Safer After Police Involvement

Figure 13: Pie Chart – Witnessed Police Not Taking DV Seriously

Qualitative Themes (Optional Visualizations)

Figure 14: Word Cloud – Factors Influencing Police Response

Figure 15: Word Cloud – Suggested Improvements to Police Response

Figure 16: Thematic Map – Common Themes in Open-Ended Responses