

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Results from a National Gender-Based
Violence Study in Malawi

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Executive summary

The collection of quantitative information on violence against women has for many years been a contentious issue. The data has often been based on reports and files from institutions of the criminal justice system, medical facilities and counselling and support groups. As such, the data has been inadequate, as it has been reliant solely on the reports of those who publicly acknowledge victimisation and/or those who, through the severity of their injuries, are forced to seek medical, welfare or legal assistance. The DFID MaSSAJ programme, recognizing this inadequacy, undertook through the Crime and Justice Statistical Division of the National Statistics Office in Malawi, a national household violence against women survey. This book presents the main findings of the study.

In total, 3,546 households were sampled, and within these 3,546 females and 2,246 males were interviewed. The innovative methodology allowed not only for an assessment of men's perceptions about intimate partner violence, but also minimized the chance of any retribution or violence resulting from the women's participation in the study.

Focusing on intimate partner abuse only, the study explored sexual, emotional, and physical violence, as well as financial abuse. Rather than using broad definitions that might be subject to various interpretations, specific acts of violence or abuse were provided, and respondents were asked whether they viewed such behaviour as acceptable, and whether their intimate partners had ever perpetrated such acts against them. When positive responses were recorded, the nature of such experiences was explored.

Findings of the female component of the study

- The prevalence of intimate partner violence is well recognized by women in Malawi. More than half (57%) thought that traditional beliefs, in particular polygamy, promoted gender violence. Such violence was seen as hindering community development and wasting government resources, as well as resulting in an increase of HIV/AIDS and STIs.

- The control of resources such as household finances is a pivotal factor in certain types of abuse. Respondents were thus asked who controlled the finances in their households. This is traditionally viewed as being the domain purely of the male partner, and in Malawi, this trend appears to hold. In more than seven out of ten (71%) households, the husband or male partner was reported to control the finances.
- Physical abuse is the most common form of intra-household gender violence, with 30% of women interviewed reporting some form of physical abuse by a partner. This was followed by economic abuse, with 28% reporting that their partner had economically abused them, usually through withholding money. One quarter (25%) of those interviewed said they had been emotionally abused, and just under one fifth (18%) reported that they had been sexually abused.
- When all four types of violence are combined, 48% of Malawian women reported some form of intimate partner violence, or abuse.
- A divergence exists between what women in Malawi view as acceptable behaviour, and what they are subjected to from their partners. This is reinforced by the fact that while the actions that constitute abuse tended to be viewed as unacceptable, the minority of women who actually experienced such violence viewed the acts as a crime.
- The majority of all types of abuse occurred within the home environment, and when the person was alone with the perpetrator. Alcohol was commonly associated with acts of violence, while there was almost no drug association.
- With the exception of economic abuse, which tended to be ongoing, most of the violence reported during the survey was a once-off incident, rather than a pattern of violence.
- Of those who reported acts of economic and emotional abuse, the majority were self-employed, while amongst victims of sexual abuse, the majority were dependent on remittances from family, friends, or even their partner.
- Not surprisingly, the impact of violence is profound, at least as measured through the basic indicators explored in the study.

- Informal support structures were the most likely to be utilized by women. Family was the most common source of support turned to, followed by a marriage councillor, friends, and a traditional leader. Only 4% of those who had experienced violence turned to the police.

Findings of the male component of the study

- Male respondents were asked to identify the key characteristics or qualities they looked for when choosing a wife. The most common response was that the woman must behave herself (22%), followed by the need for women to be hard working, supportive and dedicated (18%), and trustworthy, loving and caring (13%). Physical appearance accounted for one tenth of the responses.
- Malawian men have very clear preconceptions about what their partners can and cannot do. More than half (55%) said they had expectations about how their wife should behave once married. Most importantly, she should abide by the rules her husband sets, should care for and love her family, be submissive, behave responsibly, be faithful and honest, and be trustworthy.
- These perceptions were reinforced by ideas of what could be done if the woman concerned chose not to behave. In total, half the men said there was action that could be taken if the woman chose “not to behave”. This included speaking to her about the problem, divorcing or otherwise leaving her, speaking to her advocate or to her family, speaking to a traditional leader, or sending her back to her family. Less than one fifth reported that they would tell their friends about the problem, reflecting the importance of maintaining ‘control’, and authority within the home, and the damage to one’s masculinity within the community should this be undermined.
- Men’s interpretation of the causes of gender violence varied significantly from women’s. Most commonly, men thought that misunderstanding and disagreements were the cause (27%), followed by alcohol and *chamba* (18%), men considering themselves to be superior (8%) and poverty or unemployment (7%).
- A minority of men thought it acceptable to engage in most of the behaviours categorized as economic abuse. Most commonly, a little more than one tenth (13%) thought it acceptable to prevent their partner from earning an income, and just under one tenth (8%) thought it acceptable to take money from their partner’s purse without consent. One tenth (11%) of the men had experienced this latter action, with 7.5% reporting that their partner had, at some stage, forced them to hand over money.
- Of the various actions categorized as constituting emotional abuse, the type that men were most likely to think acceptable was to limit their partner’s movements outside the house. In total 22% thought this was acceptable behaviour, while another fifth (20%) thought it acceptable to prevent their partner from communicating with the outside world. Experience of emotional abuse by men was very rare, with only 14% reporting that their partner had attempted to prevent them from communicating with the outside world.
- While less than one tenth of the male respondents consider slapping or hitting their partner to be acceptable, this still translates to just under 200 respondents. Of all the types of physical abuse, such actions were most likely to be considered acceptable, and to be used when a wife is not obeying, listening to, or respecting a man. Slapping and hitting are also the most likely forms of physical violence to be experienced by men. In total 7% had experienced this, followed by 6% who had experienced pushing and shoving by their partner.
- In total, one fifth (19%) of the men interviewed thought it was acceptable to touch, feel, or kiss their partner’s body without their consent. However, significantly fewer thought it acceptable to try to have any form of actual sex, whether penetrative, anal, thigh or oral (4.5%), or try and insert their penis anywhere their partner was not happy with (2.5%). Of note is that more than one tenth (15%) of men admitted that their partner had tried to touch, feel or kiss them against their will, while four reported that their partner had tried to force them to have either penetrative sex or non-penetrative sex against their will.

Implications

The implications of these findings are far-reaching. Gender violence has received increasing attention from policy-makers, the public sector and civil society in Malawi. Awareness campaigns and interventions have been designed and implemented over the past five years. Despite this, levels of abuse remain unacceptably high. There is, at the same time, an apparent awareness of various actions that constitute abuse and gender violence, and furthermore, an apparent disinclination to accept any such actions. This raises a dichotomy that is difficult to challenge: the conversion of awareness and ideological commitment to rejecting gender violence into actionable and physical resistance to such abuse.

There is also mixed news for the public sector service providers. Those that reported or sought help from the police were generally satisfied with the service they received, and reported that the police offered comfort to them.

However, many of the protocols that should be in place to deal with survivors of intimate partner violence are not followed. Similarly, a high percentage of those victims who sought assistance from medical personnel had to wait for more than two hours to be examined. These factors all indicate the need for greater awareness and training on the part of the service providers.

Respondents themselves had a number of suggestions on how to deal with these problems:

- greater civic awareness and education for the public;
- harsher punishment for perpetrators;
- enhanced employment opportunities generated through government;
- increase access to community and institutional services.

In addition, the following is suggested:

- There is a need for greater awareness on how to deal with abuse within the home, and the need for medical and testing support for STIs and HIV/AIDS in the case of sexual abuse.
- Further, more training and sensitivity awareness is required on the part of the police in dealing with victims. What is required is a set of

protocols that all officers have been trained in, and the implementation of which are closely monitored.

- Practical support for victims through NGO and CBO networks and centres can provide hands-on support for those forced to leave their partners.

A single strategy is required that can be implemented by all concerned agencies, and more importantly, that can be closely monitored to ensure it is correctly implemented and suitable for its target population.

Section 1: Introduction

The collection of quantitative information on violence against women has for many years been a contentious issue. The data has often been based on reports and files from institutions of the criminal justice system, medical facilities and counselling and support groups. As such, the data has been inadequate, as it has been reliant solely on the reports of those who publicly acknowledge victimisation and/or those who, through the severity of their injuries, are forced to seek medical, welfare or legal assistance.

To address this problem, several countries including Canada and the United States have, over the past few years designed and implemented specialized quantitative surveys. More recently, the United Nations, together with Statistics Canada and the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI) have designed and are in the process of implementing an international violence against women survey in 22 countries. However, all of these studies have been conducted using Computer Aided Telephonic Interview Technology (CATI) – a methodology that is inappropriate in developing countries where teledensity is very low. Therefore, conducting such research in Malawi requires a different approach.

Key issues for the research

Defining violence against women

Exactly what constitutes violence against women is an issue of much debate in academic, research and support service discourse and there is no single or standard definition. Issues commonly explored under the broad ‘violence against women’ rubric include rape, sexual assault, physical assault, and domestic abuse/assault. However, this excludes emotional abuse and financial or economic abuse, the impact of which may, in some instances, be as great as that associated with direct physical violence. Given that this was the first study of its kind in Malawi, it was proposed that the research be structured to take a wider view of the issue and to assess its impact on affected women’s lives.

The research thus examined physical violence, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and economic abuse experienced by women in Malawi. The focus of the study was on intimate partner violence and abuse. Although the survey did collect data on violence perpetrated by non-intimate partners, the cases were too few to enable sound analysis. In addition, an earlier survey of crime victimization in general in Malawi had shown that intimate partner violence was a greater problem than non-intimate violence.¹

In this survey, intimate partner violence and abuse was analysed at four levels:

- *The extent of the problem* – measured by analysis of incidence at an individual level, through data collected at a representative and randomly selected household sample.
- *The nature of the problem* – measured through an analysis of women's experience of abuse within the selected households.
- *The impact of the problem* – measured through assessing the effects of violence and/or other kinds of abuse on the daily activities of affected women.
- *Mitigating the impact of the problem* – measured through assessing the support required by survivors of this abuse.

Access to respondents

In abusive relationships, partners or spouses may be reluctant to have their partners interviewed about their experiences. Further, in strongly patriarchal households it is fairly common that both partners perceive it as the man's role to speak for anything that occurs in the household. This was likely to inhibit access to selected respondents in Malawi. Also, interviewing women about such sensitive issues can, and sometimes has, resulted in further victimisation when the partners of the respondents discover what the topic of the interview has been. The safety of the respondents (and of the interviewers) therefore requires careful consideration.

¹ E Pelsler, P Burton and L Gondwe, *Crimes of Need: Results of the Malawi National Crime Victimization Survey*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2004.

Methodology

Given the challenges of the research, an innovative methodology was required. In households selected for the survey which were headed by men, both partners were interviewed simultaneously, using slightly different interview instruments, and in different rooms. The interview instrument for men focused on attitudes towards women, attitudes towards violence and behaviours in particular circumstances. There are three advantages to this approach:

- Interviewing both male and female respondents within a household lessened the 'threat' to male respondents, whose opinions as household heads or 'dominant' partners, were also being sought.
- Men were effectively kept away from women respondents during the course of the interview, allowing for the requisite levels of privacy (and safety).
- Interviewing men on their attitudes and behavioural patterns provided useful ancillary information to support the main findings of the research.

This approach is based on interview teams of two, consisting of a male and a female interviewer. Female respondents were only interviewed by women, and male respondents by men. In households selected for the survey in which men were not resident, only the resident women were interviewed. Where two or more adult women (over the age of 18 years) were present within a household, a KISH grid was used to select the respondent.

The sampling frame was obtained from the 1998 Malawi Population and Housing Census Results. In order to ensure representivity and minimize sampling errors, the multi-stage probability proportionate to size method was used to select a sample of 3,546 households, with a sample of 3,546 female and 2,246 male respondents. The total figure of males and females was divided accurately into regional samples and then into district samples. Enumeration Areas from the Traditional Authorities were drawn and numbers of households were determined in each. Selection of individual households to administer the questionnaires was done in the field.

All supervisors and fieldworkers underwent an intensive five-day training course, which included two days of sensitivity and awareness training.

The questionnaire for the study combined questions and definitions utilized in previous surveys, in particular, the Institute for Security Study's survey of violence against women.² These were adapted to the Malawi context, and where necessary, definitions were expanded, or additional actions and behaviours included.

Structure of the study

For clarity, the findings from the female interviews – which constitute the bulk of the research – are presented first. The following section presents the demographics of the female sample. This is followed by a discussion of how gender violence is understood in Malawi. Next, an overview of abuse or gender violence is presented, followed by a more in-depth examination of the nature of gender violence. This section includes a depiction of the women who are being abused, as well as the men who are perpetrating the violence. The section considering the impact of the violence on the women follows, followed by an overview of the help-seeking behaviour of female victims.

The male findings are presented in part two of the report. First, a profile of male respondents is provided. This is followed by a description of what males look for when choosing their wives. The second section of this part details men's perceptions and experiences of economic, emotional, physical and sexual violence. The findings from both sections are then drawn together in a conclusion to the report.

Survey demographics

The majority (88%) of the women interviewed lived in rural areas, reflecting the distribution of Malawi's population. More than half (54%) were married, with another three out of ten (31%) cohabiting with their partners. Of

those who were married, four fifths (59%) were married under customary law (such as *lobola* and *chikaw mini*), and 37% considered themselves to be married under cohabitation and repute. Only a very small percentage of the sample had been recently married: just over one fifth (21%) had been married between six and ten years, while only fractionally less (20%) had been married between three and five years. More than one tenth (15%) had been married for between 11 and 15 years.

In total, four fifths (61%) had completed their primary education, and more than one quarter (27.5%) had no schooling whatsoever. Just a single percent, or 39 individuals, had a tertiary qualification.

More than half (52%) of the households consisted of between three and five people, while another third (35%) had between six and ten people. The mean household size was four people. Two out of five households had between three and five children, and 36% had just one or two children.

Economic independence is an important factor in many types of gender violence, with many abused individuals dependent on their partners for economic survival. In Malawi, where poverty is pervasive, it may appear somewhat surprising that one fifth (21%) of the female respondents reported that their husbands or partners supported them. However, this apparent low rate of dependence is perhaps explained by the fact that more than half (54%) of the women reported that they were self-employed, referring in many instances to micro and subsistence enterprises that most adults in Malawi are forced into in order to survive. In an environment in which a meal on the table is seldom guaranteed, being dependent on a single member of the household is a luxury that few can afford, and all household members are often forced into the informal economy to ensure their survival.

This is further reflected in the depiction of gross monthly incomes that the respondents provide. While three out of ten females had no monthly income in an average month, earners were most likely to earn between 500 and 999 Kwacha (15%) (about US\$4 to US\$8.30), or between 1,000 and 1,999 Kwacha (14%) (about US\$16). Another tenth (12%) earned less than 500 Kwacha in an average month, while at the other end of the spectrum, just 4% earned in excess of 12,000 Kwacha (US\$100).

² S Rasool, K Vermaak, R Pharoah, A Louw and A Stavrou, *Violence Against Women: A National Survey*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2002.

Section 2: How women understand gender violence

Perceptions of violence differ vastly between various cultures and communities. Many practices considered violent within one environment are considered ‘normal’ in another. Respondents were asked their understanding of what constitutes gender violence. The most common responses focused, unsurprisingly, on different forms of physical violence, including beating or strangling (55%). However, failure to provide or take care of wives was also common (11%), as was treating wives “like a slave”. Another 5% thought that men’s failure to show love and affection to their wives also constituted violence.

Of interest is that while the study was presented as a gender violence study, and the objectives explained to respondents as determining attitudes and occurrences of violence between men and women, most respondents tended to couch their answers within the context of their own personal relationships, allowing a nuanced and very personal picture to be portrayed.

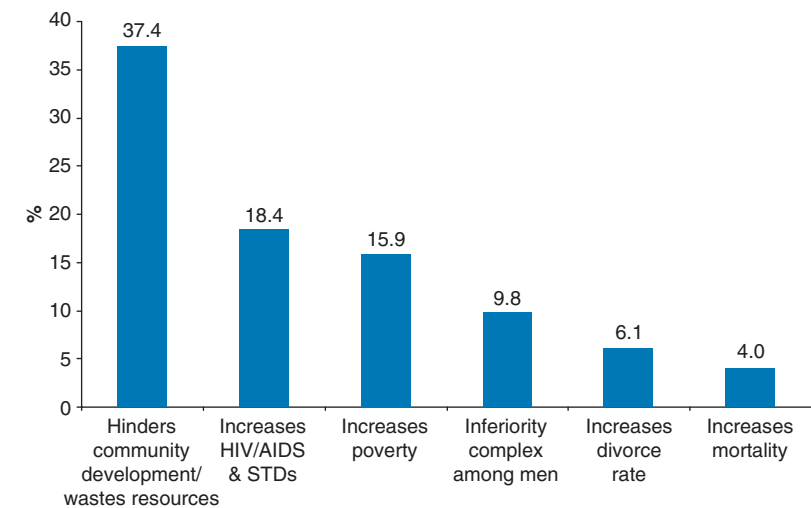
More than one half (57%) of the women interviewed in this study said that traditional beliefs in Malawi promote violence against women. Of these, polygamy was cited most commonly as the practice encouraging abuse (35%), followed by wife inheritance (30%) and *lobola* (or bride price) (10%).

Women also seemed to perceive the impact of gender violence in both wider, social terms as well as in more direct personal terms. Most commonly, women thought that gender violence hinders community development and wastes government resources (37%), while less than one fifth thought that it results in an increase of HIV/AIDS, and STDs (18%). Only fractionally fewer (16%) thought that gender violence increases poverty. One tenth (10%) said that such violence results in an inferiority complex on the part of either men or women, and misunderstanding between the sexes (Figure 1).

Control of household resources

The control of resources such as household finances is a pivotal factor in certain types of abuse. Respondents were thus asked who controls the

Figure 1: Views about the impact of gender-based violence on the community



finances in their households. This is traditionally viewed as being the domain purely of the male partner, and in Malawi, this trend appears to hold true. In more than seven out of ten (71%) households, the husband or male partner was reported to control the finances, while in one fifth (20%) of the households, the woman did so. In 6.5% of the households surveyed, the man and wife shared control of the financial resources.

Control of the household finances itself is a somewhat loaded phrase, and can be interpreted in several ways. Control may refer to the handling of daily cash for everyday tasks and expenditure, or may refer to decisions regarding large cash outlays. However, it is often in the control of the daily finances that much of the potential for abuse exists.

Given this, respondents were asked who was responsible for daily financial control, exhibited in tasks such as buying the groceries and food. In more than three fifths (62%) of the households, the husband or male partner was responsible for buying the daily groceries and food, and almost all (85%) of the women reported that they were satisfied with this arrangement. Only 15% said they were not happy with this male control of the daily household finances. Of those who were dissatisfied, more than

half (57%) thought they should be responsible for these tasks, and another fifth (23%) argued that they should share such responsibilities.

The potential for the abuse of power in relation to finances is perhaps best illustrated by the question of whether respondents were at liberty to spend any money that they receive from anyone else (other than their partner). Three out of ten women (31%) reported that they could not spend such monetary gifts, and had to either consult their partners, or more often, actually had to give their husbands or partners the money. Similarly, more than one half (53%) of the women said they could not spend money, generally, without their partner's consent.

This control of finances was primarily attributed to the role assumed by men in the society: more than two fifths (44%) of the women said their husband or partner believes it is his duty and responsibility, and in another three out of ten (32%) cases it is the male who accounts for all the money available. Significantly, in just under one tenth (8%) of the households, the male was reported to believe that the wife or female partner is incompetent when it comes to handling the finances.

This scenario sets the scene for the first type of abuse or gender violence explored in the study, namely that of financial abuse, as discussed in the next section.

Section 3: Experience of abuse

The study explored four types of abuse or violence that might occur between partners. These include economic, emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Women were asked about their experiences of abuse over their lifetime. When detailed answers were required about the nature of the abuse, they were asked to think about what they regarded as the most serious incident.

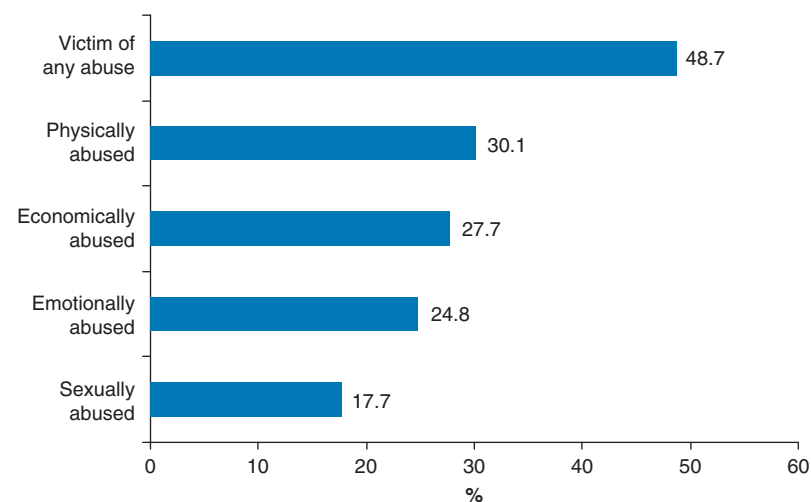
When compared, physical abuse was the most common form of intra-household gender violence, with 30% of women interviewed reporting some form of physical abuse by a partner. This was followed by economic abuse, with more than one quarter (28%) of women reporting that their partner had economically abused them, usually through withholding money. One quarter (25%) of those interviewed said they had been emotionally abused, and just under one fifth (18%) reported that their partner had sexually abused them.

The high percentage of women reporting sexual abuse is somewhat surprising at first glance. However, a number of factors might contribute to this. Respondents were asked about a range of detailed acts that are considered to constitute abuse. Many of these acts might not, within certain societies, have been considered abusive practices. Indeed, many might be considered acceptable and 'normal' within the bounds of a marriage or intimate relationship.

Anecdotal evidence encountered during the design of the study suggested that, in fact, a man who does not project an air of 'entitlement' and 'ownership' of his wife might be suspected of infidelity and the scenario might suggest that something in the relationship was awry.

Similarly, the high occurrence of physical abuse in relation to the other forms of abuse might also reflect an acceptance of men's role in 'correcting' and 'disciplining' women. A recent study undertaken by GTZ in Malawi highlights the role of men as authoritarian patriarchs who have the right to discipline their wives through beatings should their wives not fulfil their

Figure 2: Overall experience of intimate partner abuse within the household



expected roles, which include the provision of sex on demand, as well as domestic chores such as the preparation of dinner.³

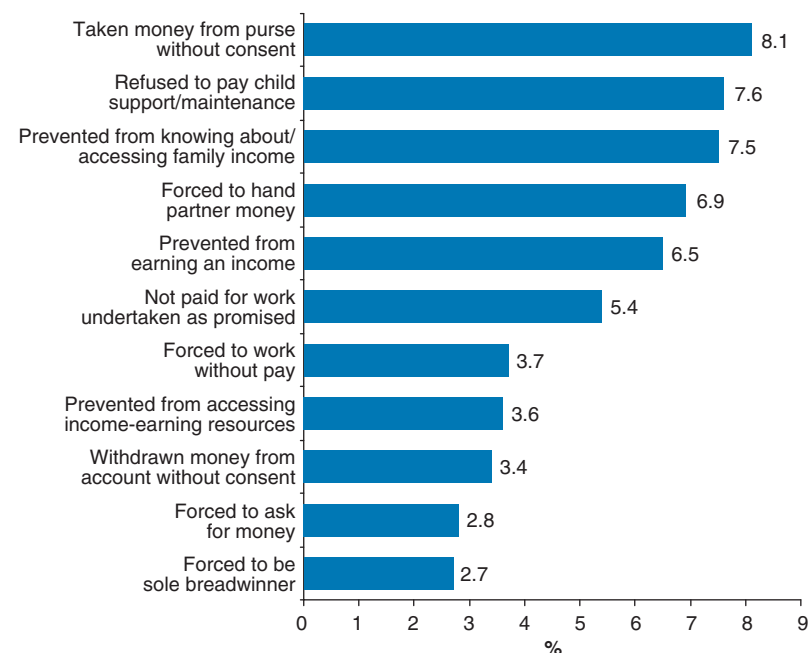
The combination of all these types of abuse means that a total of just under one half (49%) of women, or one out of two, have experienced some form of abuse by their intimate partner – a percentage that far exceeds any other estimates provided up till now.⁴

A more detailed analysis of the different types of abuse allows for various nuances to be identified.

Economic abuse

Economic abuse was defined as any act, within the confines of a marital or household relationship, in which one partner forces the other to hand them money; to ask others for money, food or clothes; prevents one partner

Figure 3: Experience of economic abuse



from having access to, or knowing about the family income; or earning an income themselves; or accessing any resources that might enable them to earn an income. Also included was any situation in which one partner forced the other to be the sole breadwinner when that responsibility could be shared; or took money from the other without their consent, including withdrawing money from their partner's bank account without their partner's knowledge; refrained from paying their partner for work undertaken; forced their partner to work without being paid, or refused to pay monthly child maintenance or support.

"My husband slapped me because I asked him to give me money to buy household items. He told me that it is him who works so he has the freedom to use the money on whatsoever he thinks. I'm suffering yet he spends money on beer and other women."

³ GTZ, Combating Gender Based Violence Project, Workshop Report on the presentation of the findings of the baseline study on gender based violence carried out in Rumphji, Dedza and Mulanje, 14-15 July 2003.

⁴ P Kakhongwe, *Literature Review on Gender Based Violence in Malawi*, unpublished report compiled for the GTZ Combating Gender Based Violence Project, 2004.

Women in Malawi tended to be very aware of all of these actions, and almost without exception did not view them as acceptable. A maximum of 2%, or 76 women, considered any one of these actions to be acceptable. The few exceptions that did occur were justified when the partner needed all available money to support the family (24%), or when one partner was away and money was needed urgently (16%). Another 10% of those who condoned this behaviour reported that if the partner had no money of their own, these actions would be acceptable.

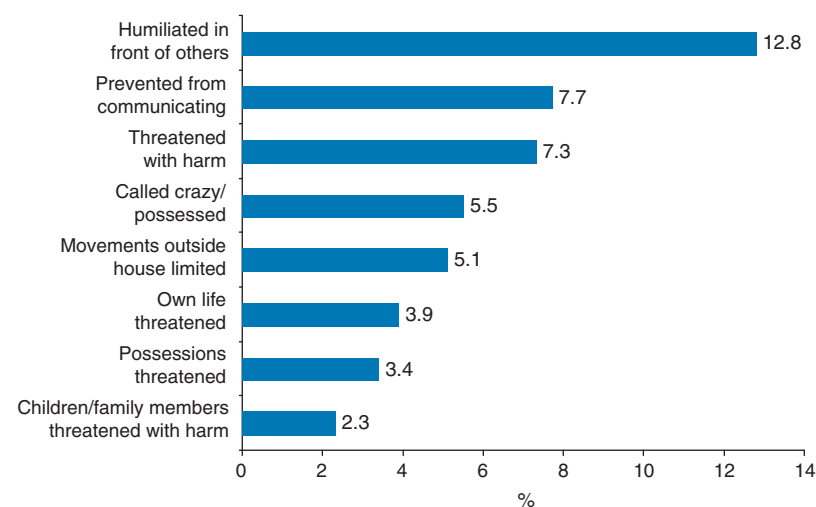
Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse was defined as any act in which a partner prevents the other from communicating with other people; limits their movements outside the house (after the age of 18 years); humiliates the other in front of people; calls the other crazy, possessed, or threatens to take them to a mental hospital/facility; threatens to hurt them, or harm their children or other family members; threatens to damage any of their possessions; or threatens to take their life, or that of their children. Finally, emotional abuse was also considered to include instances in which one party might threaten to commit suicide if their partner did not do what they wanted.

As with financial abuse, women tended to be very aware of what constituted emotional abuse, and to find any such behaviour unacceptable, particularly within the confines of a household relationship. Such behaviour was in fact less likely to be considered acceptable, and only 0.7%, or 26 respondents, thought that it was acceptable to threaten to hurt one's partner. This was the form of emotional abuse most likely to be considered acceptable, followed by threats to damage property (0.6%) and threats to take their partner's life (0.5%). For those few who did consider any of these behaviours to be acceptable, the most common was within an environment when the partner was jealous (31.5%), or when the wife was communicating with gossipers and men (26%).

Despite this widespread awareness of what constitutes emotional abuse, a relatively large percentage of the female respondents still said they were subject to such behaviour. Most commonly, more than one tenth (13%) of women reported that their partner humiliated them in front of others, while

Figure 4: Experience of emotional abuse



8% (or 272 respondents) had been prevented from communicating with others outside their home by their partner, and fractionally fewer (7%) had been threatened with harm (Figure 4).

Physical abuse

This is the form of abuse that is most commonly attached, in the public's mind, to gender violence, in part perhaps because it is often the most visible. Physical abuse is by definition violent.

The definition provided to respondents included any incidents in which their partner might have thrown something at them that could harm them; pushed or shoved them; twisted their arm; pulled their hair; slapped or hit them; kicked, or punched them; choked, strangled or suffocated them; hit them with some object; burned or scalded them; used a knife or gun on them; or physically harmed any children or other members of the family.

Perhaps given the violent nature of this form of abuse, levels of acceptance of such acts were the lowest of the three types of abuse already considered. Only 108, or 3%, of the women interviewed felt that it was acceptable for their partner to hit or slap them; followed by 55 women (2%) who thought it was acceptable for their partner to kick them. Less than 0.5%

"I was asking him about his love relationship with a certain lady so instead of answering me he started slapping me."

"Each time my husband is not in good mood, he just shouts at me and if I ask, he beats me with anything, and last time he twisted my arm up to the point of going for x-ray."

"My husband was coming from the bar where he went to drink beer. When he arrived home he rung the bicycle bell, but unfortunately I was busy cooking and I did not hear that. He rushed to me and asked me why I did not welcome him; before I explained, he started beating me."

"One of our children had an incident of breaking a mud pot and broke it while the relish was there. As a result the pot was destroyed and the relish was on the floor. So my husband beat him."

"I went to draw water and because there were a lot of people, I came late and he twisted my arm until my arm was dislocated."

"We went to the stadium and my team was performing better than his so he was getting bored as I was supporting my team. So after the match, my team won the game and I hugged one of the players but my husband got angry and started punching me."

"As I was staying with my husband I went to attend a church meeting but when I came back, my husband beat me up and burnt all my belongings."

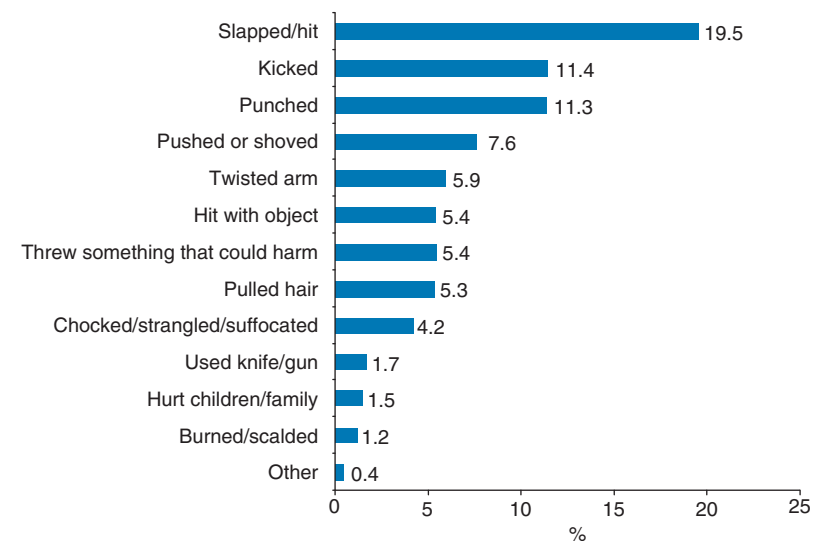
"My husband had two wives so my husband was supposed to stay at one home for one week and it happened that he stayed at the other wife's house for two weeks and I went there and quarreled with my co-wife. My husband was annoyed and he beat me."

"My husband heard that I was having a relationship with another man. When he asked me about it, I refused [to say anything] and we started quarreling until he slapped me."

"My husband refused to give me money for the maize mill. I went to seek causal work, and since I came late he started punching me."

"My husband cut my ear because I asked him about his secret affairs."

Figure 5: Experience of physical abuse

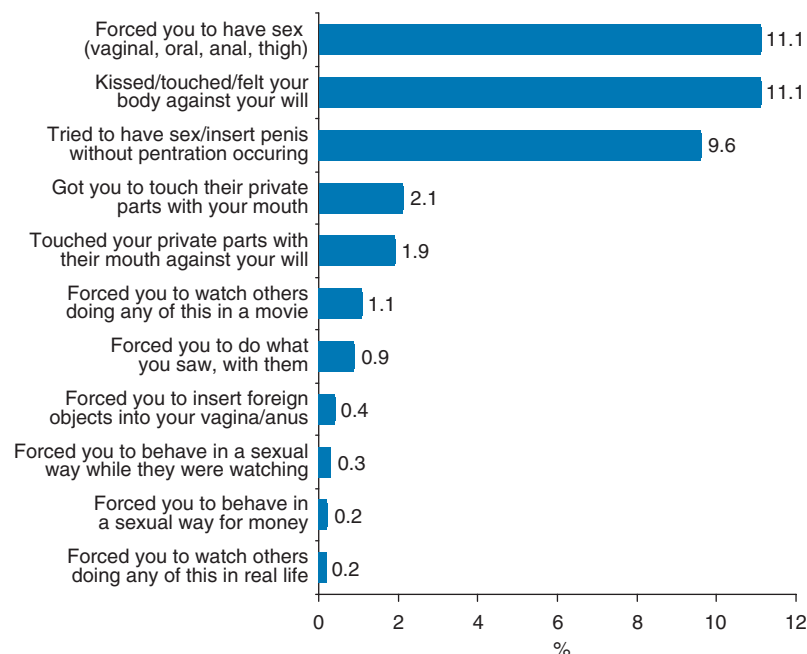


of women thought that any of the other actions falling under the definition of physical abuse was acceptable.

Of those women who did think that any of these behaviours was acceptable, the most common condition under which it was deemed all right was when they were being disrespectful or disobedient towards their husbands (43%). Another fifth (21%) of women who thought any of these behaviours was acceptable considered it so if their partner was angry.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse included any acts in which the partner tried, or succeeded in kissing, touching or feeling the respondent's body against their will; tried or succeeded in having sex, or in inserting his penis into places the respondent was not happy with, without vaginal penetration taking place; have any other form of sex (including penetrative, oral, anal or thigh) against their will; touched the respondent's private parts with their mouth against their will; forced the respondent to touch their private parts with their mouth; forced the respondent to watch any of the above in a film, or

Figure 6: Experience of sexual abuse

to watch others doing any of the above, against their will. It also included any instances in which the partner forced the respondent to insert foreign objects into her vagina or anus against her will; forced them to behave in a sexual way with another person while they were watching; or forced the respondent to behave in a sexual way with another person for money or any other form of payment, against their will.

This definition was intended to be as broad as possible, and to encompass any and all forms of sexual behaviour that individuals might be forced into against their will, rather than merely confined to the 'traditional' interpretation of sex as penetrative or oral sexual intercourse.

This broad definition highlighted the fact that many of the acts that are usually considered to be abusive, are seen as more acceptable within the confines of a relationship. In total 5% of women interviewed thought it was acceptable for their partner to force them to have non-penetrative sex (i.e. when a man tries to insert his penis into places they are not happy

with, without actual penetration taking place), or to force them to have penetrative sex, whether vaginal, anal, oral or thigh sex.

Further, various forms of sexual abuse were more common than others, or at least reported as such. More than one tenth (11%) of the women reported that their partner, be it a husband or boyfriend, had at some stage forced them to have penetrative sex, or had tried to touch them, kiss them or feel their body against their will. One tenth (10%) said their partner had tried to have non-penetrative sex with them against their wishes. Three percent of the respondents reported multiple types of sexual abuse. This means that just over one third (35%) of women in Malawi experienced some form of sexual assault in their lifetime. This may have occurred with their current partner or spouse, or with a previous boyfriend or husband.⁵

There is clearly a dichotomy between what Malawian women view as abuse, and their acceptance of certain behaviours on the one hand, and what in practice they are subjected to, on the other. Questions around whether they think of the above behaviours as abusive, contrasted with their actual experience of those behaviours, shows how little control they have over their own bodies, and the experiences they are forced to endure.

⁵ It should be noted that as with the other types of abuse under examination, respondents were asked specifically about incidents within the confines of an intimate relationship.

Section 4: The nature of gender violence

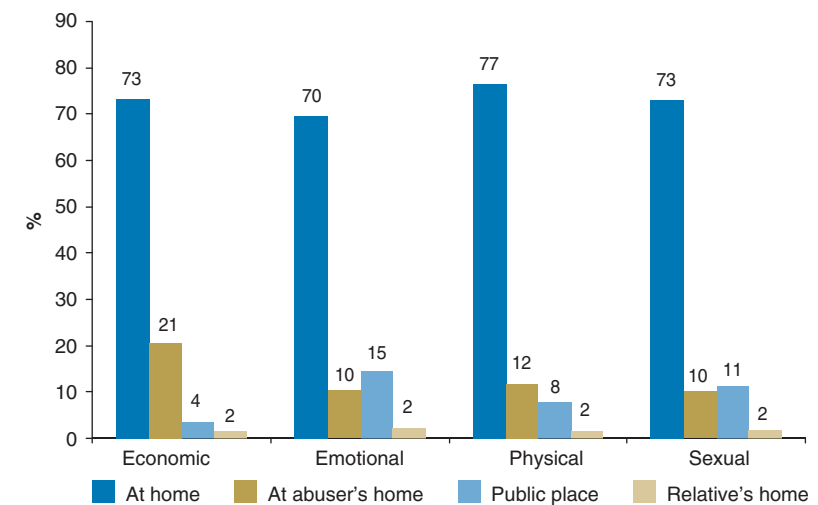
This text box summarises a victim's account of the physical abuse she suffered at the hands of her former husband. She gave this photo to the interviewers to take with them as evidence of some of the violence that she had experienced.



“My ex-husband and I lived for two years without a child. So from nowhere he started ill-treating me. He used to lock me up in the house for the whole day. Sometimes he could let me sleep outside the house naked in the cold. He could do this, I believe from his friend's influence. When I left him [at the house] one day, he came when I was bathing in the evening. I was alone and he came unnoticed and stabbed me in the back. As I tried to touch my back and look at who the person was, he stabbed me on the wrist and thigh. When I tried to look at the person, he stabbed my face. I cried and at this time I didn't feel any pain until I was brought to the hospital.”

Respondents who experienced any form of abuse, were asked to recall the most serious incident (in the case of more than one), and to provide a number of details on the nature of the abuse. Specifically, questions were asked about: the perpetrator, where the incident occurred, any other people who might have been present at the time of the incident, whether they

Figure 7: Where the abuse happened (thinking of the most serious incident)

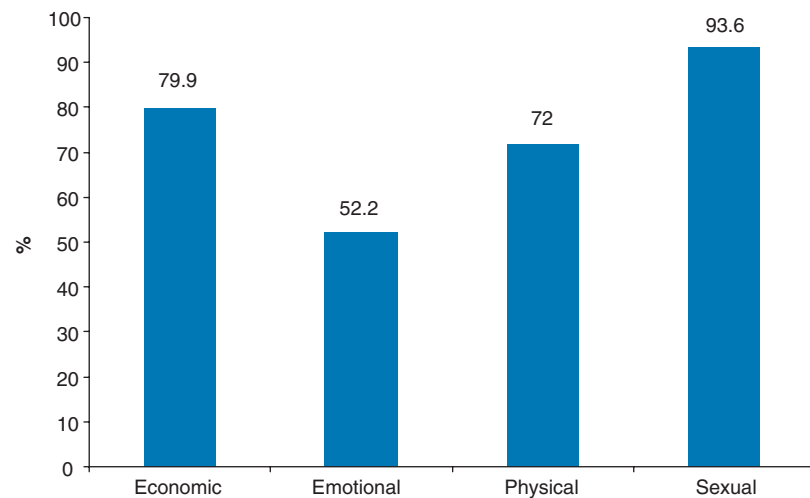


thought drugs and alcohol were being used at the time, and the effect the incident had on the respondent.

Respondents who had been victims of abuse were first asked about where the incident occurred. While reports were restricted to violence experienced at the hands of intimate partners, this does not necessarily imply that the abuse always happens within the home. However, this is the most likely scenario, with between 69.5% of those reporting emotional abuse, and 76.5% of those reporting physical abuse saying that the most serious incident occurred at home.

Another relatively common location was the abuser's home, suggesting that much of the abuse occurred within relationships in which the woman was not necessarily living with her partner at the time. In three of the four types of abuse, public places, either outdoors or indoors, were also common sites of abuse, with up to 14% of women who reported emotional abuse citing public places as the site of the most serious incident. Of note for the education authorities is that 16 women, who reported being victims of physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner, said this incident occurred at school.

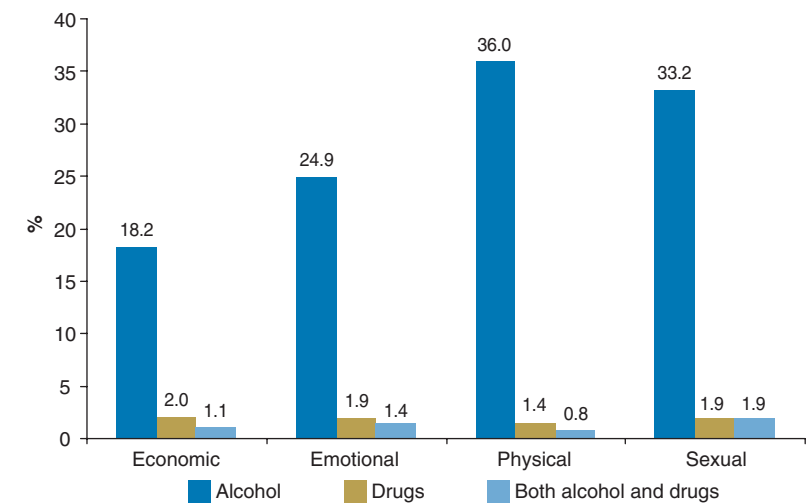
Figure 8: Percentage of women who were alone at the time of the most serious incident



Perhaps because most of the abuse occurred in the home, in the majority of cases, the woman was alone with the perpetrator at the time. This is also to be expected given the nature of abuse, with obvious exceptions such as public humiliation. While the majority (72%) of women who reported physical abuse were alone at the time, it is still somewhat surprising that a little over one quarter of the incidents occurred while others were present.

The use of alcohol is commonly associated with incidents of domestic violence and abuse. In Malawi, the trend remains the same. While not in the majority, intoxication was recorded in a significant percentage of abuse cases reported by women during the survey. This varied from 18% in the case of economic abuse, to more than one third (36%) of instances of physical abuse (Figure 9). This trend is to be expected, given that economic abuse tends to be part of an ongoing behavioural pattern that is likely to be evident regardless of the state of mind of the perpetrator, while physical and sexual violence is likely to be catalyzed by the intake of either alcohol or drugs. The use of recreational drugs in Malawi is probably low, thus explaining the low reports of perpetrators under the influence of drugs during the incident.

Figure 9: Percentage of incidents in which the perpetrator was believed to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs

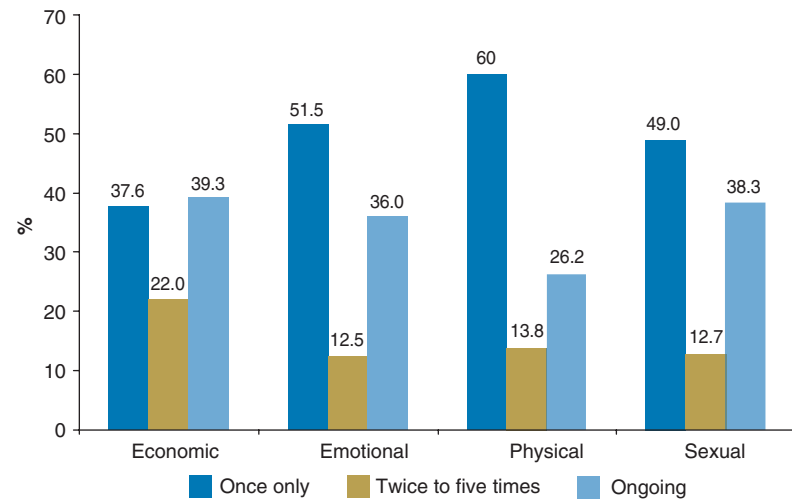


Abuse that occurs within the home often takes the form of a pattern consisting of several incidents, rather than just a single incident. The trend in Malawi was, however, a little different. With the exception of economic abuse, in which slightly more women reported that the abuse was ongoing (39%) than once off (38%), most women said their experience of intimate partner abuse was just a single incident.

This breaks the mould of abuse as an ongoing behavioural pattern, but may also reflect hesitancy on the part of women to speak badly of their partners – itself an important fact within Malawian culture. In total, only a little under two out of five women who were victims of sexual abuse said that it was ongoing; slightly fewer (36%) emotional abuse victims said this was the case; and one quarter (26%) of physical abuse victims reported that it was part of a larger pattern of abuse (Figure 10).

Despite the very small number of women who reportedly view the individual acts of abuse as acceptable, a significantly higher percentage did not view their experience as a crime. This emphasizes the divergence between what is considered acceptable within a relationship in terms of treatment and abuse, what people are willing to put up with, and what is

Figure 10: Duration of abuse



actually considered legally wrong. In more than one quarter (27%) of the sexual abuse reports, the women thought that what had occurred was not legally wrong, and could not be reported to the police, followed by just under one fifth (19.5%) of the emotional abuse incidents, and 17% of the incidents of physical abuse (Figure 11).

This perception is just one of the factors that will influence the reporting rate of incidents of abuse, both to the police or to anyone else. In an environment in which individuals may not have faith in the police and justice system, alternative points of reporting might include local and traditional leaders, or even counselling centres and clinics. However, when women do not perceive the abuse as being inherently wrong, or a violation of their rights, and rather as an extension of the rights of ownership of a man over his partner, they are unlikely to report the incident to anyone. Further, victims of abuse are often too embarrassed to report abuse, and do not consider it to be important enough to warrant reporting.

All these factors contribute to explaining the reporting rates of abuse presented in Figure 12. In the case of sexual violence, more than two thirds (68%) of the women have never told anyone about the incident, or incidents.

Figure 11: Percentage of abused women who thought what they had experienced was a crime

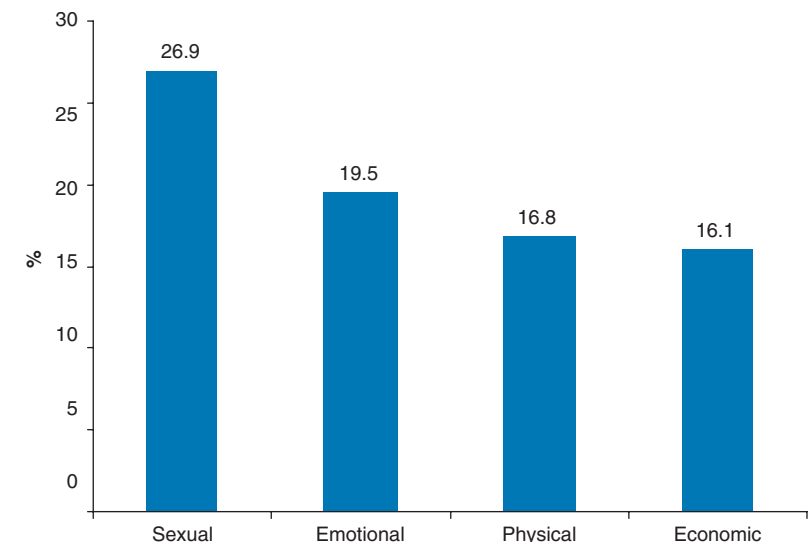


Figure 12: When abuse was reported (to anyone)

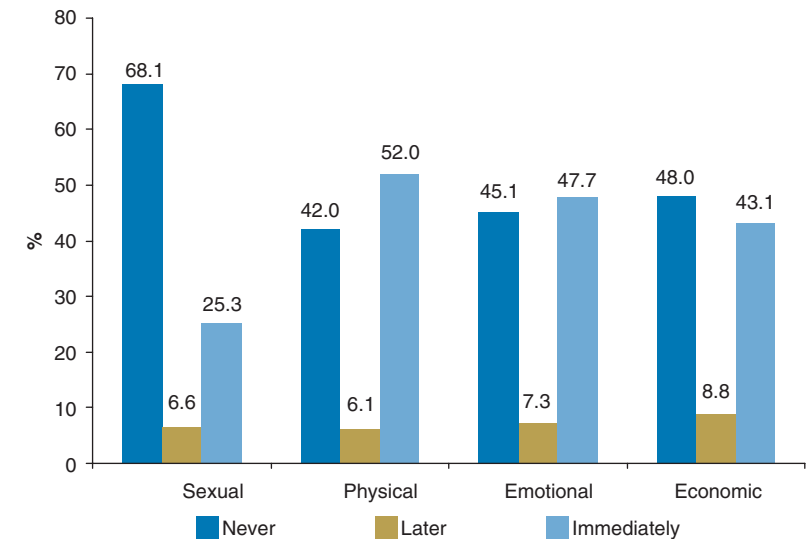
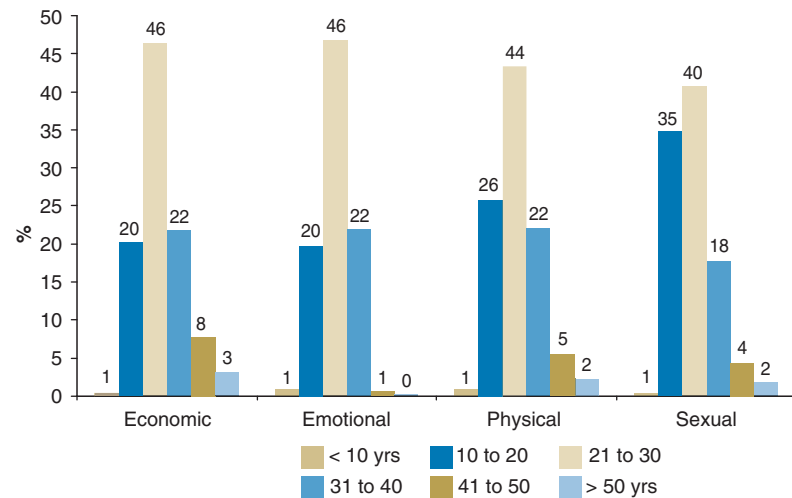


Figure 13: Age profile of abused women

In more than two out of five cases of physical abuse, no one was told. Importantly, in terms of taking action and gathering any evidence at least, when people were told of the incident, this tended to happen immediately after the incident (52%), rather than at a later stage.

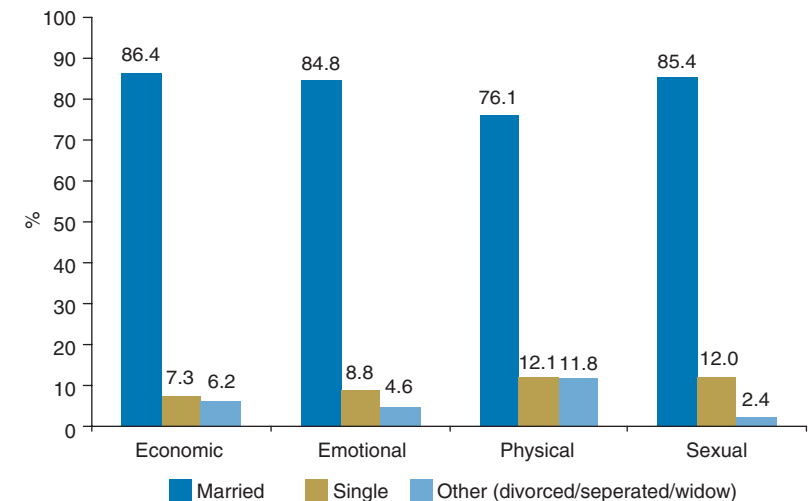
Reporting rates for emotional and financial abuse were lower, with less than one half (48%) of women reporting emotional abuse immediately, and even fewer (43%) reporting financial abuse immediately. A cross tabulation of these types of abuse revealed that it is when money was physically taken, or threats of physical harm made, that these cases of abuse were most likely to be reported to someone.

A profile of abused women and their abusers

Respondents were asked a series of questions about themselves at the time of the incident. When more than one case of abuse had happened, they were asked to refer to the most serious incident.

Women who are being abused

The sample of those women who had experienced some form of violence by their partner broadly correlates with the overall profile of the total sample.

Figure 14: Marital status of abused women

Across all categories of abuse, those between the ages of 21 and 30 years were the most likely to be victimized, while those older than 50 years were the least likely. Of note is that young women between the ages of 10 and 20 years were more likely to be victims of sexual abuse by their partner than any other types of abuse (Figure 13).

Most of the women who reported abuse were married, with married women constituting between three quarters (76%) of the sample of abused women in the case of physical violence, and more than four fifths (86%) in the case of economic abuse. While the difficulty of getting out of an abusive relationship is well recognized, this difficulty is exacerbated by the bonds attached to marriage, especially in a relatively conservative country like Malawi.

Abusive relationships are even more difficult to escape when one partner is dependent on the other for financial support or survival. The employment status of women who report abuse is thus an important variable for assessing the likelihood of ending such abuse. While those women who reported economic and emotional violence were most likely to be self-employed (46% and 43% respectively), those reporting physical and sexual violence were more likely to be dependent on remittances

Figure 15: Employment status of abused women

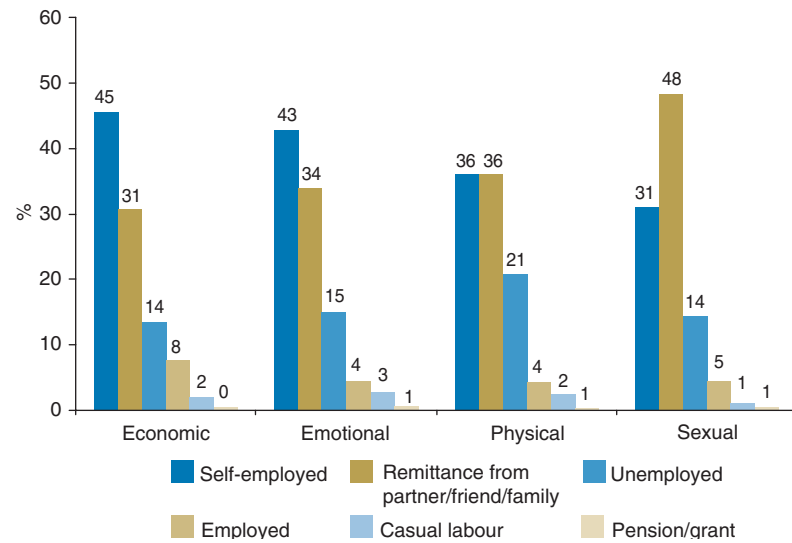


Figure 16: Average monthly income of abused women

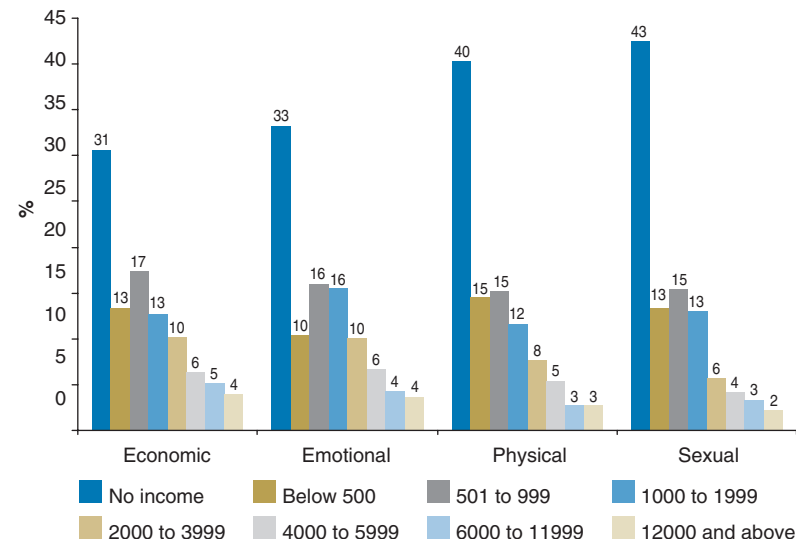
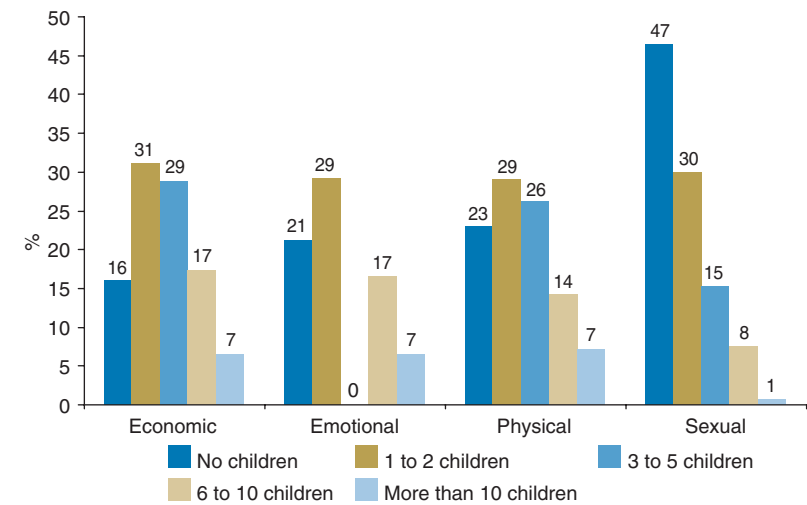


Figure 17: Number of children in the household

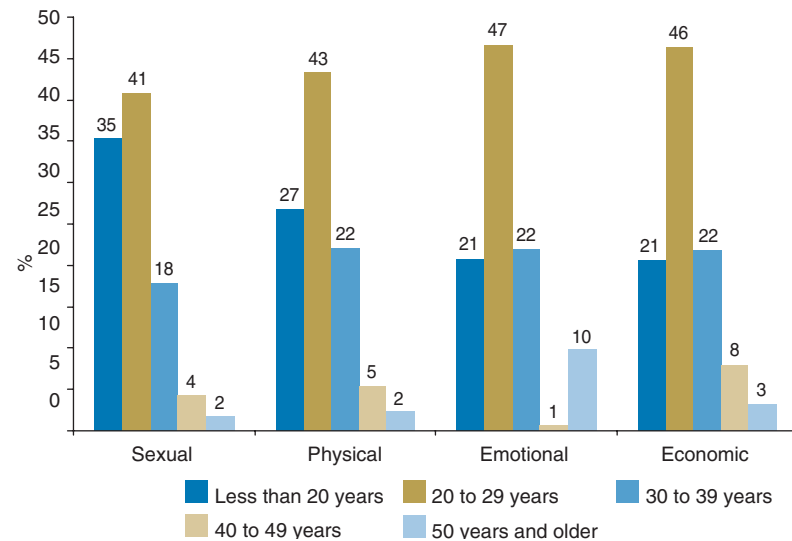


from friends, family or their partner (36% and 48% respectively). While dependency on their partner for money is one difficulty, being dependent on family for remittances can be equally problematic, as pressure from family members to remain in abusive relationships can be just as demanding.

The employment status of the respondent to some degree pre-empts the earning profile of the women. Given the high levels of dependency on remittances, and within an environment in which self-employment often refers to marginal subsistence activities such as making a living through micro and informal activities, the income reported by the respondents is unlikely to be sufficient to survive on.

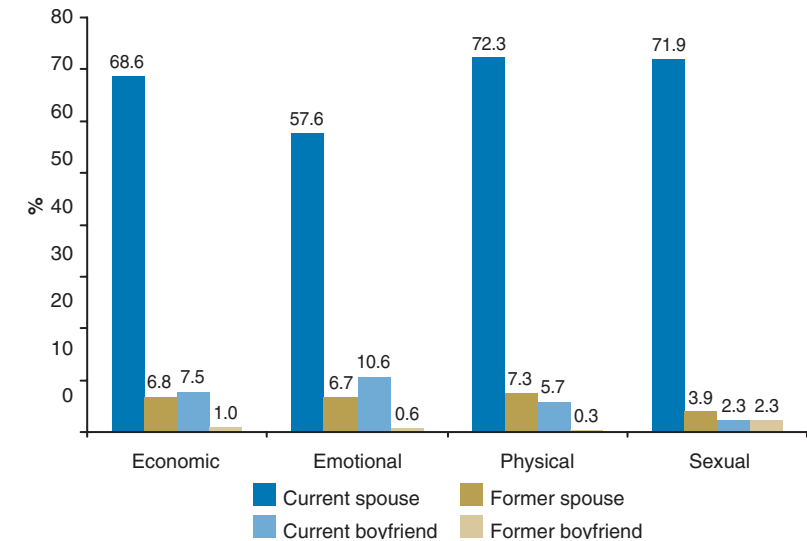
This indeed is the picture presented by Figure 16. Between three out of ten (31%) and two fifths (42.5%) of the abused women were unemployed, while those who were earning an income were most likely to earn only between MKw500 and MKw999 per month; an amount that is insufficient for household survival. In total, across all categories of abuse, roughly three out of five abused women earn less than MKw1,000 per month.

Such low levels of income further exacerbate the difficult position faced by the women when considering that they may have dependents

Figure 18: Age at which abuse first occurred

who need to be protected and supported as well. As Figure 17 illustrates, with the exception of those reporting sexual abuse, most of the women had between one and two children (31% in the case of women reporting economic abuse, 29% of those reporting emotional, and 29% of those reporting physical abuse). Most of the women, should they choose to somehow get out of their abusive relationship, would assume responsibility for their children as well, placing further pressure on an already untenable financial situation.

Much of the violence experienced at the hands of the women's partners also tended to be an ongoing experience, starting at a relatively young age. Most of the respondents, between two fifths (31%) in the case of sexual abuse and up to 46% in the case of economic abuse, report that the violence or abuse first started when they were between the ages of 21 and 30 years old. However, a significant percentage said the abuse started when they were even younger, with up to one third (35%) of those who were sexually abused reporting that it first started when they were younger than 20 years. This suggests that once a precedent is set, a pattern of abuse tends to emerge over a period of time.

Figure 19: Relationship of perpetrator to respondent

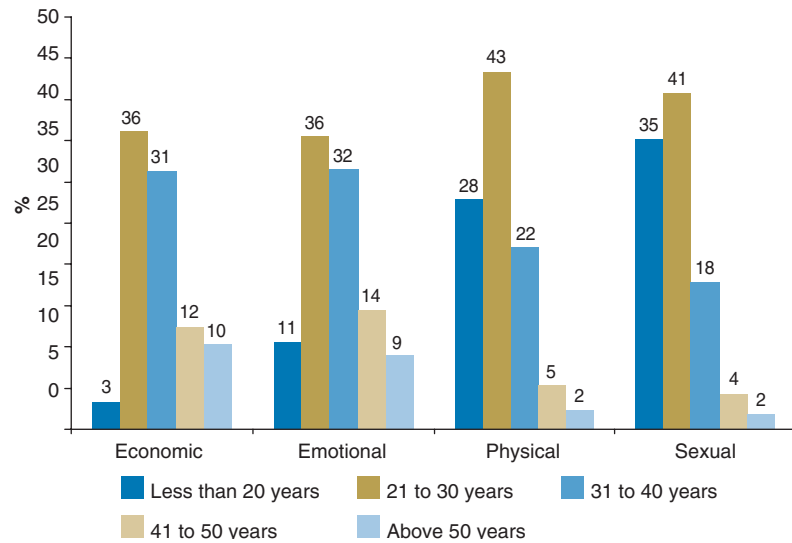
Men who are abusing women

A limited number of questions were put to respondents to try and gain a superficial overview of the men who are responsible for intimate partner abuse in Malawi.

In the vast majority of cases across all types of abuse, the man responsible for the most serious incident was their current spouse or partner. This varied from more than half (58%) in the case of emotional abuse, to almost three quarters (72%) in the case of sexual violence. The second most common type of perpetrator was a current boyfriend; this category however accounted for a tenth or less across all categories of abuse (Figure 19).

The age profile tended to follow that of the profile of the women themselves, with the most common age for perpetrators being between 21 and 39 years. This age group accounted for between more than one third (36%) of the men perpetrating economic abuse, to 43% of the men inflicting physical violence on their partner. Of note is the much higher percentage of men less than 20 years who inflicted sexual abuse on their partner compared to the other types of abuse. This fact is of significance in developing awareness and anti-abuse campaigns, which clearly need to be targeting young men below the age of 20.

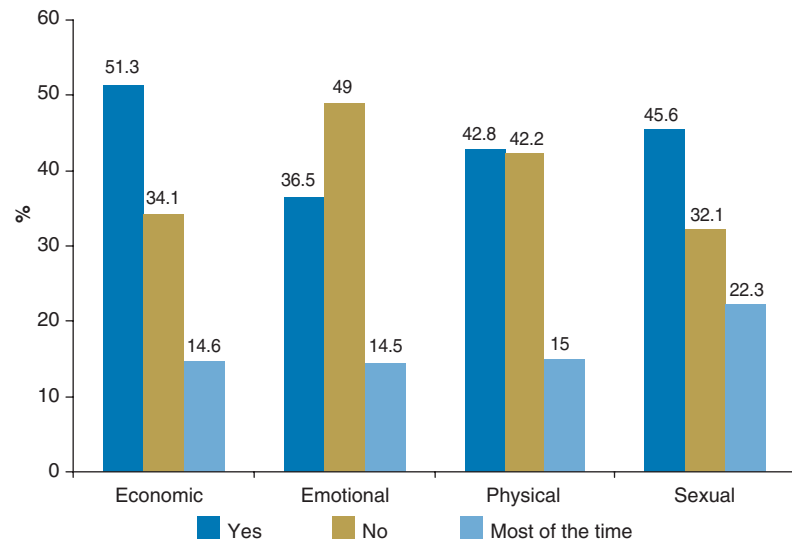
Figure 20: Age of men responsible for abuse



Issues of self-esteem and self-worth are related to abuse, both in the psyche of the abuser, and the abused. One of the most significant factors influencing the self-esteem of many men is their ability to fulfil the role of breadwinner, or financially support their family or wives. The increase in domestic violence in communities where unemployment is high is well documented in a range of literature. This may thus be an important factor in Malawi, where poverty is pervasive and employment is rare.

Figure 21 is therefore somewhat surprising, indicating as it does that in the case of women reporting economic, physical and sexual violence, their partner was employed. In the case of financial abuse, being employed does clearly put the abuser at an advantage over the abused, as power and control over income is a prerequisite for many forms of economic abuse. Similarly, various forms of emotional violence, such as threatening to commit suicide or other threats may be resorted to when other forms of control (such as over the family finances) are unavailable.

Figure 21: ‘Was the perpetrator working at the time of the abuse?’ (the most serious incident if more than one)



Section 5: Impact of abuse on the individual

Much has been written on the impact of abuse on women, both in the short term and in the longer term. While it is beyond the scope of this study to explore in detail the long term psychological, or psychosocial impact of the incidents women experienced, several questions were asked about how they felt immediately following the incident, and how they felt at the time of the interview. In addition, a number of common symptoms of psychological and emotional harm were also explored, such as insomnia, depression, irritability, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, panic attacks and flashbacks. The intention was to simply provide a brief overview of the potential and real impact that experiences of abuse had on women in Malawi.

Not surprisingly, the impact of abuse was profound, at least as measured through the basic indicators explored in the study. In the cases of economic abuse, almost three quarters (73%) of the victims reported some

Figure 22: Impact of economic abuse on women (n=983)

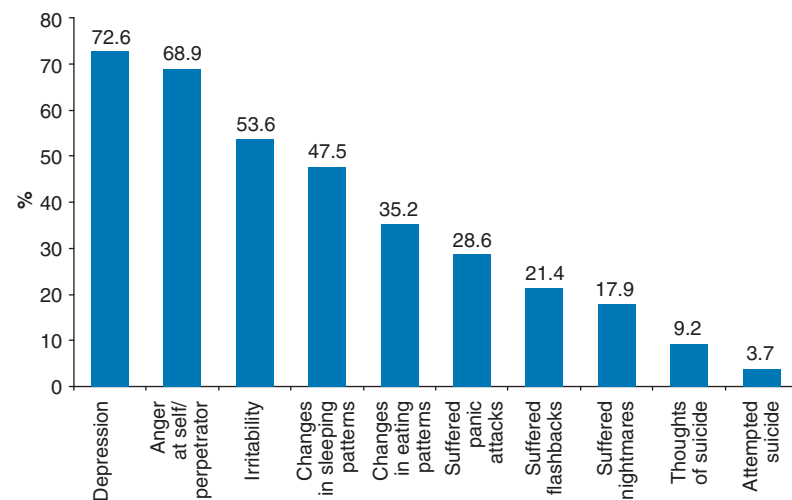
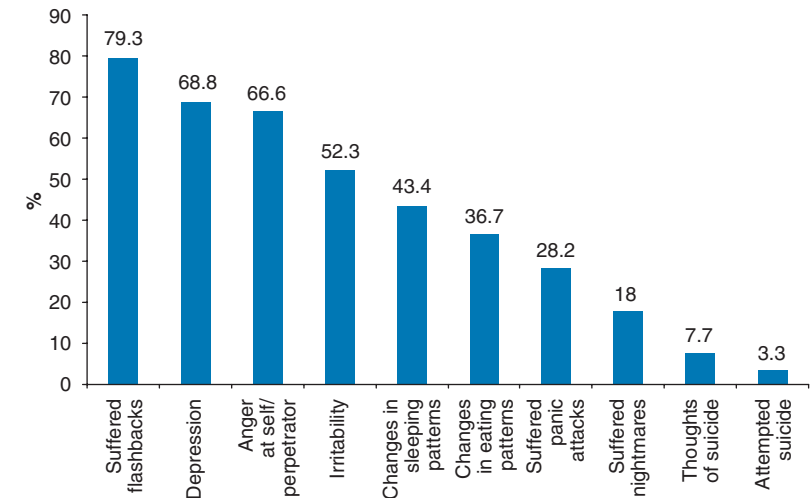
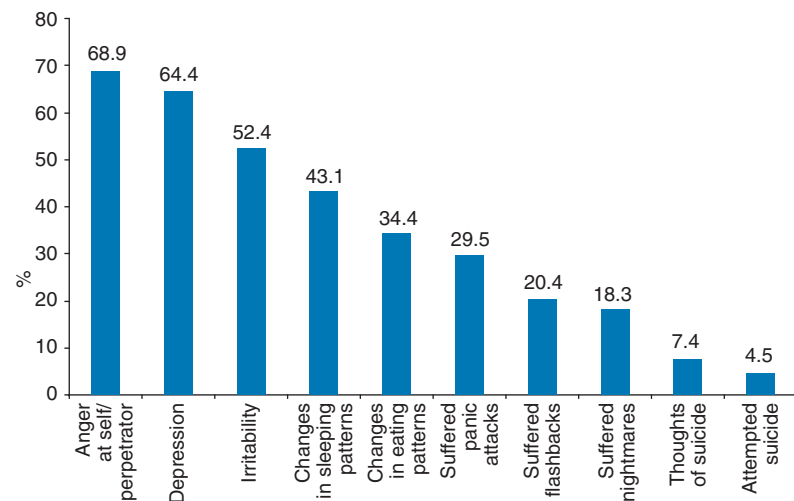


Figure 23: Impact of emotional abuse on women (n=880)



form of depression following the incident, while just more than two thirds (69%) reported being angry with their partner. More than one half (54%) of the victims reported irritability, while just under one out of two victims reported some change in their sleeping patterns following the incident. While only 4% of the victims reported that they had attempted suicide following the abuse, this translates to 36 individuals, which is in itself a worrying fact. Almost 10% of the women reported that they had thought of committing suicide.

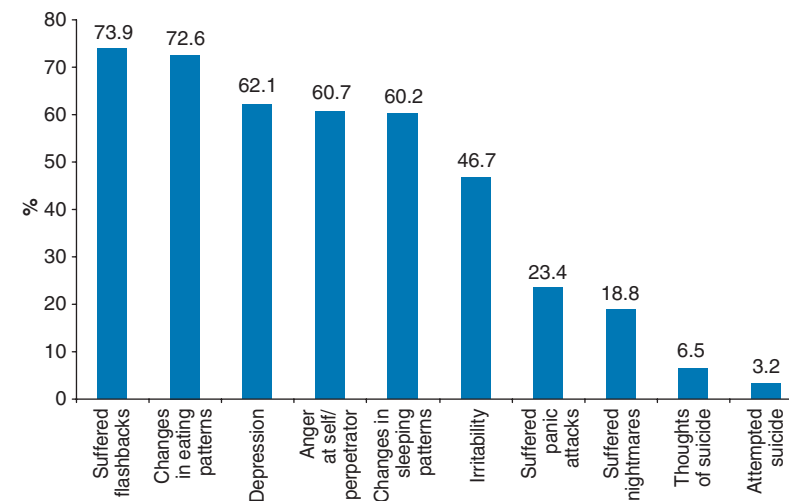
The trend is almost identical amongst those women who had been victims of emotional abuse, with various symptoms of mental well-being reflecting the negative impact of the women's experiences. In the case of emotional abuse, flashbacks were most common, with four fifths of the women reporting such occurrences. The greatest percentage of these were victims of public humiliation. This was followed by just under seven out of ten women (69%) who had experienced depression, and only fractionally fewer (67%) who felt anger at themselves, or at the perpetrator. Again, suicide and thoughts of suicide are worryingly present, with 3% of the women attempting suicide, and another 8% having thoughts of suicide.

Figure 24: Impact of physical abuse on women (n=1,068)

Changes in sleeping patterns were experienced by just less than one half (43%) of the victims, and changes in eating patterns experienced by over one third (37%) of the victims. More than one quarter (28%) of the women had suffered from panic attacks as a result of their experiences.

Much the same trend can be identified amongst those victims of physical violence. Anger at themselves or at the perpetrator was very evident, as is depression. More than one half (52%) reported irritability, and more than two fifths (43%) said their sleeping patterns had changed as a result of their abuse. Almost 40 individuals, or 4.5% had attempted suicide, while seven out of every hundred (7%) had thought about suicide.

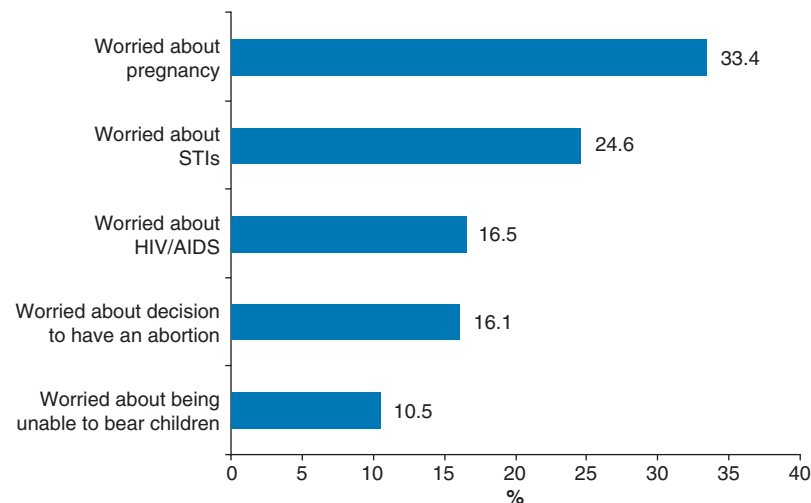
It is clear from Figure 25 that sexual violence has the most profound impact on victims of all the types of abuse. Almost three quarters (74%) of the women who reported some form of sexual violence said they suffered flashbacks, while only slightly fewer (73%) reported changes in eating patterns. Almost two thirds (62%) said they were depressed, and attributed this fact directly to their experiences, while three out of five (61%) said that they were angry at themselves or at the perpetrator. Fractionally fewer (60%) of the women reported that they had experienced changes in sleeping patterns, most common difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep. Just

Figure 25: Impact of sexual abuse on women (n=626)

under one half of the women (47%) were more irritable, and almost one quarter (23%) reported that they suffered panic attacks following the abuse (Figure 25).

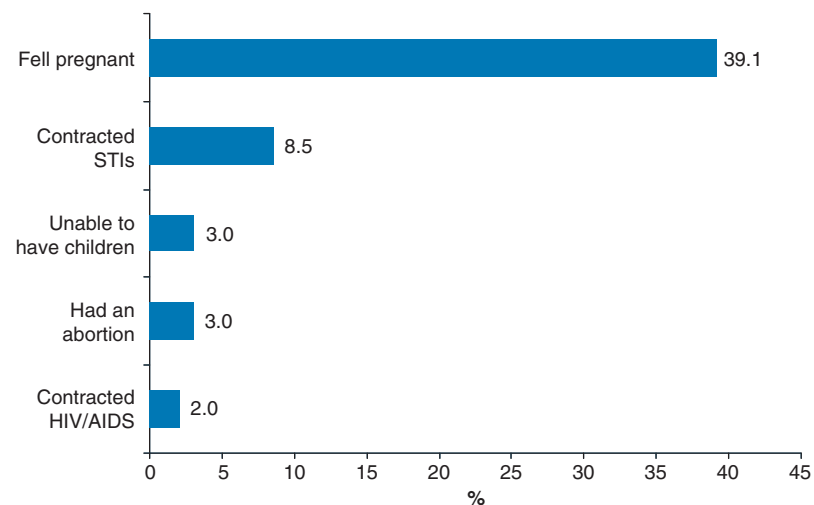
The picture painted thus far reveals the far-reaching and profound impact that the levels of abuse are having on women in Malawi. A significant proportion of the women in the households visited in the survey experienced debilitating symptoms that can be attributed directly to their experiences of economic, emotional, physical and sexual abuse by their intimate partners. These impact on their general mental health, their relationships with their family and others, and their ability to act and cope in their everyday world. Despite this, most of the women are likely to carry on with their everyday roles and responsibilities, with few options available to them to deal with the consequences of their experiences.

Women who are sexually abused have to deal with a number of potentially debilitating consequences, as well as additional psychological pressures that are unique to that type of violence. In particular, these include worries about pregnancy, STIs and HIV/AIDS. These are important factors to consider when designing and monitoring any form of support or post-incident intervention.

Figure 26: Concerns related particularly to sexually abused women

concerned about sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and less than one fifth (16.5%) were concerned about HIV/AIDS. A similar percentage were worried about having to make a decision about having an abortion, and one tenth (10.5%) were concerned about the incident impacting on their ability to bear children later in life.

In many of these instances, the respondents' fears were realized, further compounding the trauma of the actual act itself. Two out of five (39%) of the women who had been sexually abused fell pregnant as a result of the incident, while less than one tenth contracted STIs. It is possible that this is in fact a lower-than-accurate figure, as the respondents did not necessarily get tested for STIs following the incident, and thus many may be unaware of their status. The same argument can be made for those who reportedly contracted HIV/AIDS as a result of sexual abuse (Figure 27).

Figure 27: Further problems encountered by sexually abused women

In total, one third (33%) of the women who had been sexually abused reported that they were worried about falling pregnant after the most serious incident (in the case of more than one). One quarter (25%) were

Section 6: Help-seeking behaviour

Respondents who reported they had been victims of some form of intimate partner violence were asked if they had sought help following the incident from a range of potential support structures as well as public sector institutions. These ranged from family and friends, to police and legal support. When public sector institutions do not have the capacity to provide the services that ideally they should, informal structures such as family and community networks assume greater importance in providing support to abuse victims. Concomitantly many of those who are abused do not feel it important enough, or are too embarrassed or scared to tell anyone about the incident, thus negating the possibility of any support.

Figure 28 reveals the reliance on informal rather than institutional support when abuse is disclosed. The most common source of potential help was the family. Even this help, however, was sought by only one fifth (19%) of those women who had been abused. This was followed by the marriage councillor (16%) and friends (13%). The next most common source of assistance was the traditional leader of the area (9%), and only then medical personnel (6%). In only 4% of the incidents were the police told of the violence, and a negligible number of women turned to facilities such as the church, lawyers, victim support units and psychologists for assistance.

While services such as victim support facilities are a relatively new concept in Malawi, and have only recently been implemented, this finding suggests that either there is very little awareness of the services they offer, or even of their very existence, or that there is some form of resistance to utilizing their services. The very small number of women who turned to psychologists or councillors for help is also concerning, as the long term emotional trauma attached to all the types of abuse explored in the study is likely to go unaddressed.

Of particular concern to those involved in addressing the problem of intimate partner violence in Malawi is how little use was made of the police service. This may be a matter of access, or of trust, or even, once again, of recognizing the importance of reporting to the police. Indeed, the most

Figure 28: Who women turned to for help



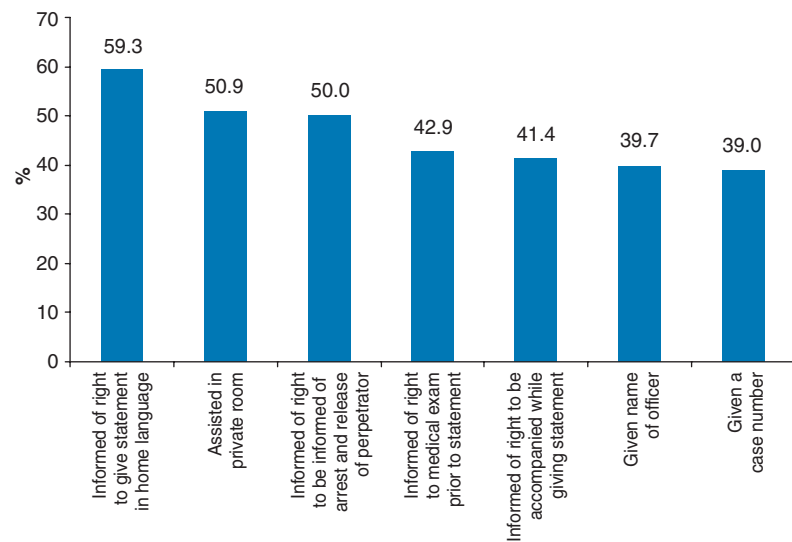
common response from those respondents who did not report is that they did not think there was a need to report the incident(s), or to seek help (36%); or that they did not think that reporting would achieve anything (30%). Another fifth (21%), however, did say that they were too embarrassed to report the abuse to anyone. More than one tenth (13.5%) of the women who had been abused and did not tell anyone were concerned that something would happen to their partner or husband.

Service received from the police

When women said they had turned to the police for assistance, they were asked a number of questions on the procedures that had been followed by the police, and the manner in which they had been treated.

Issues of embarrassment and fear are common when reporting abuse to the police. For this reason, and for sensitivity and respect to the victim, female abuse victims should only be interviewed by female officers. However, of the few (57) respondents who reported the abuse to the police, the vast majority (82.5%) were first interviewed by a male police officer, a direct contradiction of police protocol. Of those, more than one third (36%)

Figure 29: Indicators of whether police procedures were followed when dealing with abuse cases

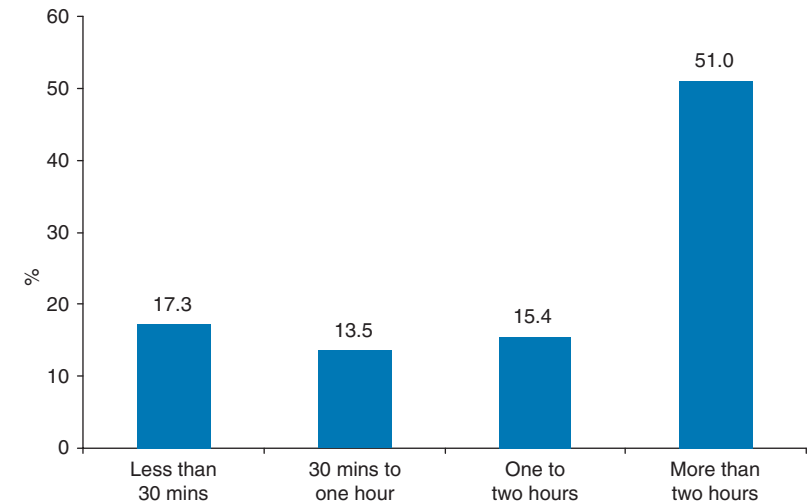


explicitly stated that they would have preferred a female officer to take their statement.

On a more positive note, the vast majority (91%) of women said they felt the police believed them. Half (51%) were interviewed in a private room, another matter of concern given the sense of embarrassment felt by many respondents. Very few (39%) respondents were provided with a case number following their reporting, and only two out of five (40%) were provided with the name of the officer who took the statement, or who would be investigating their case. In total, three out of five (59%) respondents who reported to the police were told of their right to have their statement taken in their home language. Two out of five (41%) were told they could have someone accompany them while giving their statement, and half (50%) were told of their right to be informed when the perpetrator had been arrested, or released pending trial.

Of major concern in the case of sexual and physical abuse, is the fact that only two out of five (43%) of the women were told of their right to have a medical examination prior to giving their statement. More

Figure 30: How long women waited to be examined by a medical practitioner



positively, however, the same percentage reported that in addition to everything else, the police comforted and supported them. Further, almost three quarters (72%) said they felt the police understood their problem, and three out of five (61%) thought the police could give advice on what to do.

These findings suggest that in the abstract, the police are both supportive and understanding. However, when assessed against measurable protocols for dealing with abuse cases, the police still have some way to go. Further, the majority of Malawian women who are abused, and report their abuse, remain unaware of their rights and what they are entitled to expect from the police in terms of service.

Service received from medical personnel

The service received from the medical sector in abuse cases are important not only in terms of the physical and psychological well-being of the victim, but also in terms of the collection of evidence and likelihood of a successful prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of domestic violence. Delays in collecting medical evidence, for example in the case of sexual abuse, can seriously undermine the chance of conviction. Those who reported

instances of physical and sexual violence to medical personnel were thus asked similar questions about the service they received.

When respondents received medical assistance, they tended to be examined by a medical practitioner more than two hours after the incident (51%). In less than one fifth of the incidents where such help was sought, they were examined less than 30 minutes after the incident, and in another 13.5% they were examined between 30 minutes and one hour after the abuse took place. Slightly more (15%) were examined between one hour and two hours after the incident.

When examined more than one hour after the incident, this was primarily attributed to the lack of transport (34%), or not thinking it was important till later (24%). In more than one tenth (13%) of the cases the doctor was unavailable.

In more than three quarters (77%) of the cases the doctor or nurse asked who had inflicted the harm or abuse, and in those cases where they were not asked, more than half (59%) volunteered the information. More than three quarters (77%) of the women said they told the truth to the doctor or nurse, while a little under one quarter lied, mostly attributable to fear of their husband or partner (59%) or embarrassment (41%). When the doctor or nurse was told the truth, the respondent felt that they were believed (91%), and in more than three quarters (77%) of the cases, the medical practitioner advised the respondent on what to do.

These findings are important for the design, implementation and monitoring of service delivery to victims of domestic violence in Malawi. They illustrate victims' perceptions about services, as well as the attitude and current service delivery on the part of both the police and medical service providers.

Section 7: Men and gender violence in Malawi

Perhaps the key aspect in the methodology of this household study was the inclusion of men in the study. As presented in the discussion on methodology in Section 1 above, this served two purposes: to collect data on male perceptions and understanding of gender violence and abuse within the household, and secondly, to minimize the sense of threat and insecurity that many men would feel as a result of having their wives or partners interviewed on the subject.

Many of the questions put to male respondents were identical to those put to female respondents. In particular, questions about perceptions and acceptability of certain behaviour, as well as the causes of abuse, were the same.

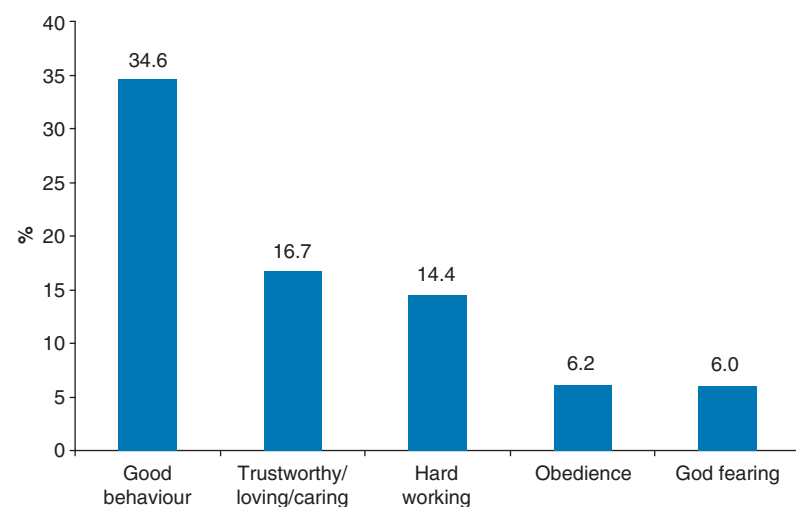
A profile of male respondents

The majority (56%) of male respondents reported that they were self-employed, while more than one tenth (14%) were employed. Another tenth (11%) said they were unemployed. When respondents were earning an income, this was most likely (26%) to amount to an average monthly income of between Mkw2,000 and Mkw3,000 – significantly higher than the majority of female earners. This was followed by those earning between MKw1,000 and MKw1,999 (18%). Just 6% reportedly earned no income, and less than one tenth (9%) earned less than MKw500 per month.

When asked the length of time they had been married, or had been with their current partner, less than one fifth (19%) said between six and ten years, while more than one tenth (11%) had been with their partner for more than 30 years. Just under one fifth (19%) had been married or with their partner for between six and ten years. Most (85%) of the men were married under customary law, including *lobola*, *chikamwini* etc, while less than one tenth (6%) considered themselves married through cohabitating and repute.

Almost two thirds (63%) had completed their primary education, while another fifth (20%) had completed secondary schooling. More than one

Figure 31: Men's views about the most important attributes in a woman (values less than 5 excluded)



tenth (15%) had no education at all. These levels are somewhat higher than those characterizing the female sample.

Choosing a partner

Male respondents were asked to identify the characteristics they looked for when choosing a wife or a partner. Responses included that the woman must: behave herself (22%), be hard working, supportive and dedicated (18%), and be trustworthy, loving and caring (13%). Physical appearance accounted for one tenth (9.5%) of the responses. When asked to rank these characteristics, good behaviour was most important (35%), followed by trustworthy, loving and caring (17%), hard working (14%), obedience (6%) and god fearing (6%).

Malawian men have very clear preconceptions as to what their partners can and cannot do. More than half (55%) said they had expectations about how their wife should behave once married. Most importantly, she should abide by the rules her husband sets (28%), should care and love her family (20%), be submissive (17%), behave responsibly (16%), be faithful and honest (8%), and be trustworthy (6%).

Two scenarios were put to male respondents to explore how they might, in practice, respond to any deviation from what might be considered 'acceptable behaviour' of a wife within the household.

Cooking scenario:

You arrive home after visiting Zombe for work / looking for work. You left home at 4 o'clock in the morning, and it is now 9 o'clock at night. You have not eaten anything all day. You find your wife has her friends visiting, and instead of cooking you a meal, she keeps talking with her friends. Even when you ask her for food she says she is busy, and keeps talking, What do you do?

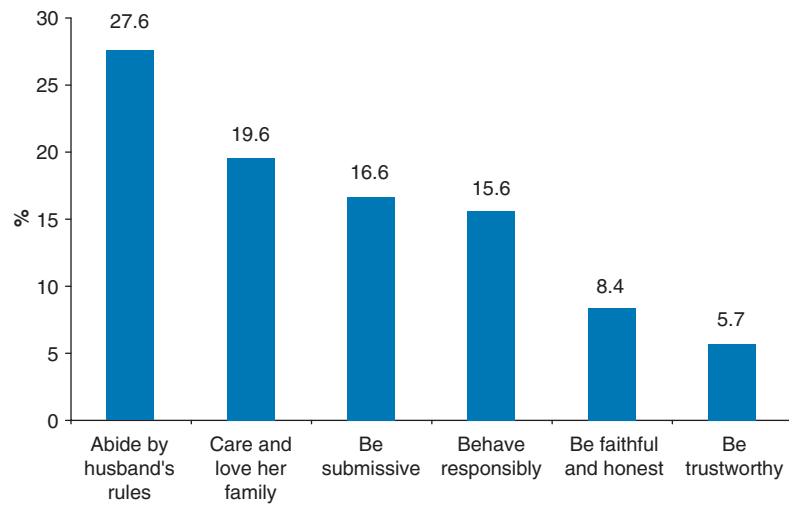
	Percent
You cook yourself something, or find something to eat on your own	37.0
Complain to the marriage counselor/relatives/family	19.3
You go to bed hungry, grumbling to yourself about your wife	10.7
Politely call her and discuss/shout privately	7.8
Nothing	7.7
Discuss with her when her friends have gone	7.2
You shout at your wife till she goes to the kitchen	3.4
Divorce her	2.8
You pull your wife away and make her cook your dinner	2.4
Not talk to her for some time	0.8
You pull your wife away and hit her	0.6
Tell the child to cook for you	0.2
Total	100.0

Sex scenario:

You have been married for five years and during the first four years of your marriage, your wife has been rendering her sexual services to you unconditionally. But for the past six months whenever you request her she always gives an excuse. You are now tired with this behaviour. What do you do?

	Percent
You complain to the marriage counselor	63.8
You send her to her home	12.6
You decide to have extra marital affairs	5.4
Find out reasons for her actions	4.0
You complain to her parents	2.9
You discuss the issue politely	2.8
You complain to the priest/church elder	2.2
Divorce/separate	1.8
Nothing	1.5
You force her against her will	1.5
Leave her until she changes her mind/attitude	1.0
You rub your penis against her body	0.1
You beat her up	0.1
Marry another wife	0.1
Go for medical checkup/help	0.1
Total	100.0

Figure 32: Men's expectations of how a wife should behave once she's married



These perceptions about men's expectations of their intimate partners were further reinforced by ideas about what could be done if their partner did not comply with their wishes. In total, one half (50%) reported that there was action that could be taken if the woman chose "not to behave". This action most commonly took the form of speaking to her about the problem (47%), divorcing or leaving her (19%), speaking to her advocate, or to her family (both 14%), speaking to a traditional leader (3%), or sending her back to her family (1%). Less than one fifth (19%) said they would tell their friends about the problem, reflecting the importance of maintaining control and authority within the home, and the damage to one's masculinity within the community should this be undermined.

Section 8: Men's perceptions and experience of abuse

Abuse, intimate partner violence and gender violence are terms that are becoming increasingly common amongst the general public in Malawi as advocacy campaigns gain momentum, and both public and NGO initiatives start to generate awareness. However, the understandings of what these terms mean may vary vastly. Male respondents were asked what they understood by the terms 'gender violence' and 'abuse'. Most commonly, men said the terms meant beating a woman (51%). However, just under one tenth thought that forcing a woman to do what she does not want to do constitutes abuse (8%), as did failure to support her economically (8%). A range of other interpretations were also expressed, all of which constituted some form of abuse or intimate partner violence (Figure 33).

Men's interpretation of the causes of gender violence varied significantly from women's. Most commonly, men thought that misunderstandings and disagreements were the cause (27%), followed by alcohol and *chamba*

Figure 33: What men think constitutes abuse

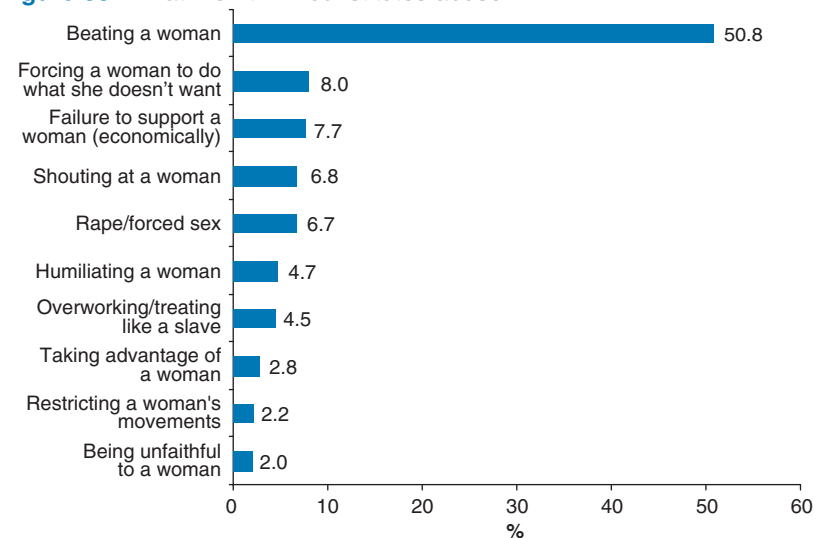


Table 1: Men's perceptions and experience of economic abuse (%)

	Consider behaviour acceptable	Has experienced behaviour
Force a partner to hand over money	5.3	7.5
Force a partner to ask for money, food or clothing	3.1	2.4
Prevent partner from knowing about, or having access to, the family income	6.8	2.4
Prevent partner from earning an income	12.6	1.6
Force partner to be the main or sole breadwinner when responsibility could be shared	0.6	3.0
Take money from a partner's purse without their consent	8.1	10.6
Withdraw money from partner's bank account without consent	2.2	3.0
Not pay partner for work done as promised	1.0	1.1
Force partner to work without being paid	2.0	1.0
Refuse to pay child support/maintenance	0.3	0.0

(18%), men considering themselves as superior (8%) and poverty or unemployment (7%).

Male respondents were asked a series of questions, based on the definitions of abuse formulated in the female questionnaire, on their perceptions of what was acceptable within an intimate or household relationship, and whether they had experienced any of these types of abuse. The same categories of abuse were used, namely economic, emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

Perceptions and experience of economic abuse

The perceptions of Malawian men reflect those identified amongst the women interviewed. A minority of men thought it acceptable to engage in most of the behaviours categorized as economic abuse. Most commonly, a little more than one tenth (13%) thought it acceptable to prevent their

Table 2: Men's perceptions and experience of emotional abuse (%)

	Consider behaviour acceptable	Has experienced behaviour
Prevent partner from communicating with outside world	20.1	14.3
Limit partner's movements outside house	22.4	0.3
Humiliate partner in front of others	1.6	5.2
Call partner crazy/possessed/threaten to take partner to mental hospital/traditional healer	1.5	2.1
Threaten to hurt partner	7.3	2.4
Threaten to hurt partner's children/family	1.8	1.5
Threaten partner's belongings/pets	0.9	2.4
Threaten to take partner's life	0.4	0.8
Threaten suicide	0.7	1.6

partner from earning an income, and just under one tenth (8%) thought it acceptable to take money from their partner's purse without consent. One tenth (11%) of the men had experienced this latter action, with 7.5% of the men interviewed reporting that their partner had, at some stage, forced them to hand over money.

Perceptions and experience of emotional abuse

Of the various types of emotional abuse, the type that men were most likely to think was acceptable was limiting their partner's movements outside the house. In total, almost one quarter (22%) thought this was acceptable behaviour, while another fifth (20%) thought it acceptable to prevent their partner from communicating with the outside world.

Experience of emotional abuse by the men was very rare, with only a little more than one tenth (14%) reporting that their partner had attempted to prevent them from communicating with the outside world. Probing around this question revealed that such instances were generally attempts to limit interaction with other women when their partner suspected extra-marital affair of infidelity.

Table 3: Men's perceptions and experience of physical abuse (%)

	Consider behaviour acceptable	Has experienced behaviour
Slap or hit partner	8.8	6.7
Push or shove partner	4.6	6.2
Throw something at partner that could harm them	3.7	4.0
Punch partner with their fist	1.0	3.4
Pull partner's hair	0.9	1.6
Kick partner	0.9	2.3
Use a knife or gun on partner	0.6	0.5
Hit partner with some object	0.5	3.0
Twist partner's arm	0.3	1.6
Hurt partner's children/family	0.1	0.5
Choke, strangle or suffocate partner	0.0	1.2
Burn or scald partner on purpose	0.0	1.0

Perceptions and experience of physical abuse

Table 3 reflects the various forms of physical abuse that men considered to be acceptable within relationships, as well as the types of physical abuse that men actually experienced. While less than one tenth of the respondents considered slapping or hitting their partner to be acceptable, this still translates to just under 200 respondents. Such actions were more likely to be considered acceptable behaviour than any other, and to be used when a wife is not obeying, listening to, or respecting the man.

Slapping and hitting were also the most likely form of physical violence to be experienced by men within intimate relationships. In total 7% of men had experienced this, followed by 6% of men who experienced pushing and shoving by their partner.

Perceptions and experience of sexual abuse

In total, one fifth (19%) of the men interviewed thought it was acceptable to touch, feel, or kiss their partner's body without their consent. However,

Table 4: Men's perceptions and experience of sexual abuse (%)

	Consider behaviour acceptable	Has experienced behaviour
Try or succeed to kiss, touch or feel their partner's body without their consent	19.3	14.8
Try to have sex (including oral, penetrative, anal, thigh) (with their partner against their will)	4.5	4.2
Try to have sex with their partner without their consent or try to insert their penis into places their partner is not happy with	2.5	4.2
Insert a finger ('dipstick') into their partner's vagina to check whether the partner has been faithful in their absence	1.9	n/a
Touch their partner's private parts with their mouth against their partner's will	1.0	0.0
Force their partner to watch others doing any of the above in a movie	0.6	0.0

significantly fewer thought it acceptable to try to have any form of actual sex, whether penetrative, anal, thigh or oral (4.5%), or to try and insert their penis anywhere their partner was not happy with (2.5%). Despite the fact that the practice colloquially known as 'dipsticking' remains common, just 2% of men admitted to thinking this was acceptable.

Of note is that more than one tenth (15%) of men admitted that their partner had tried to touch, feel or kiss them against their will, while 4% of men reported that their partner had tried to force them to have either penetrative sex or non-penetrative sex against their will. Unfortunately, these numbers are too small to provide any sort of meaningful analysis about the actual incident.

Section 9: Conclusion

This report has presented the findings of the first survey on gender-based violence in Malawi. Malawian women clearly are subject to high levels of violence and abuse. Definitions of abuse were formulated to be as broad as possible, and to include all types of behaviour that might be considered violent or abusive, and that might occur within intimate relationships. Most common in Malawi is physical abuse, with almost one third of women reporting some form of physical abuse. More than one tenth reported sexual abuse, and in total, almost half of the women interviewed had been abused in one way or another.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching. Gender violence has received increasing attention from policy-makers, the public sector and civil society in Malawi. Awareness campaigns and interventions have been designed and implemented over the past five years. Despite this, abuse remains unacceptably high. There is, at the same time, an awareness that various actions constitute abuse and gender violence, and furthermore, an apparent disinclination to accept any such actions. This raises a dichotomy that is difficult to challenge: the conversion of awareness and ideological commitment to rejecting gender violence into actionable and physical resistance to such abuse.

There is also mixed news for the public sector service providers. Those that reported or sought help from the police were generally satisfied with the service they received, and said that the police offered comfort to them. However, many of the protocols that should be in place to deal with survivors of intimate partner violence are not followed.

Similarly, an unacceptably high percentage of those victims who sought assistance from medical personnel had to wait for more than two hours to be examined. This may have been for reasons beyond the control of the medical practitioners, but suggests that there is clearly something lacking in the response to such cases. These factors all combine to indicate the need for greater awareness and training on the part of the service providers.

What can be done to deal with these problems? Some of the suggestions from the respondents themselves included:

- greater civic awareness and education for the public;
- harsher punishment for perpetrators;
- enhanced employment opportunities generated through government;
- increase access to community and institutional services.

These suggestions, while all pertinent, are premised on the commitment of the public sector, and the availability of adequate resources. Certainly, greater employment opportunities might have some impact on alleviating both the causes and the effects of abuse; women would certainly be more able to leave their abusive partners and support themselves. However, this alone is insufficient, as well as being only part of a long term strategy that is dependent on factors outside the control of those working in the sector:

- There is a need for greater awareness on how to deal with abuse within the home, on the implications of gender violence, and the need for medical and testing support for STIs and HIV/AIDS in the case of sexual abuse.
- More training and sensitivity awareness is required on the part of the police in dealing with victims. What is required is a set of protocols that all officers have been trained in, and the implementation of which are closely monitored.
- Practical support for victims through NGO and CBO networks and centres can provide hands-on support for those forced to leave their partners.

All these efforts need to be brought together in a single strategy that can be implemented by all concerned agencies, and more importantly, that can be closely monitored to ensure correct implementation and suitability for the target population.