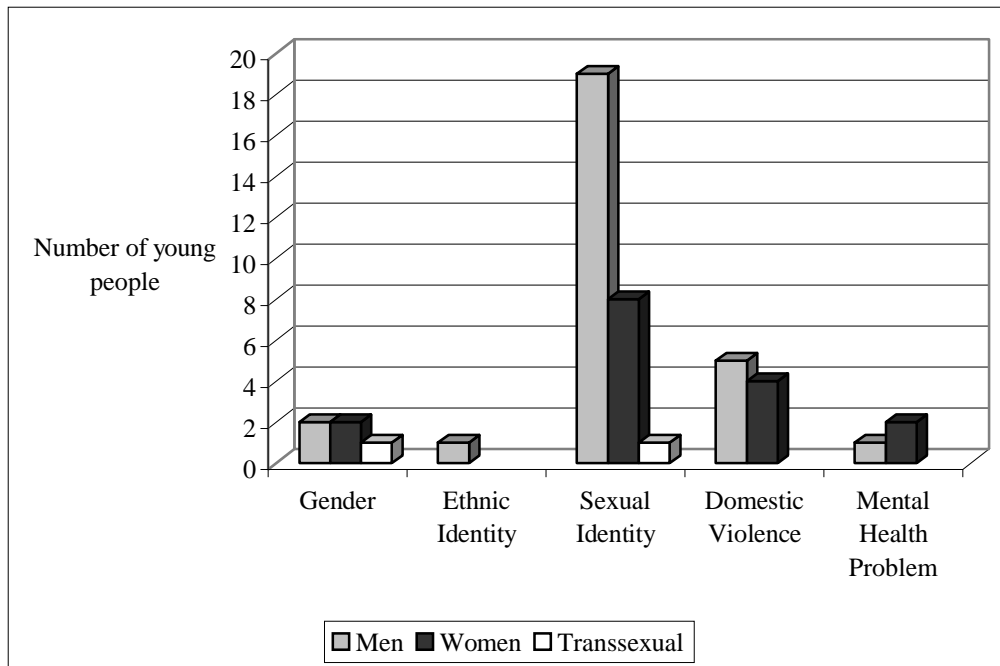


Chart 36 shows the reason for the physical abuse.

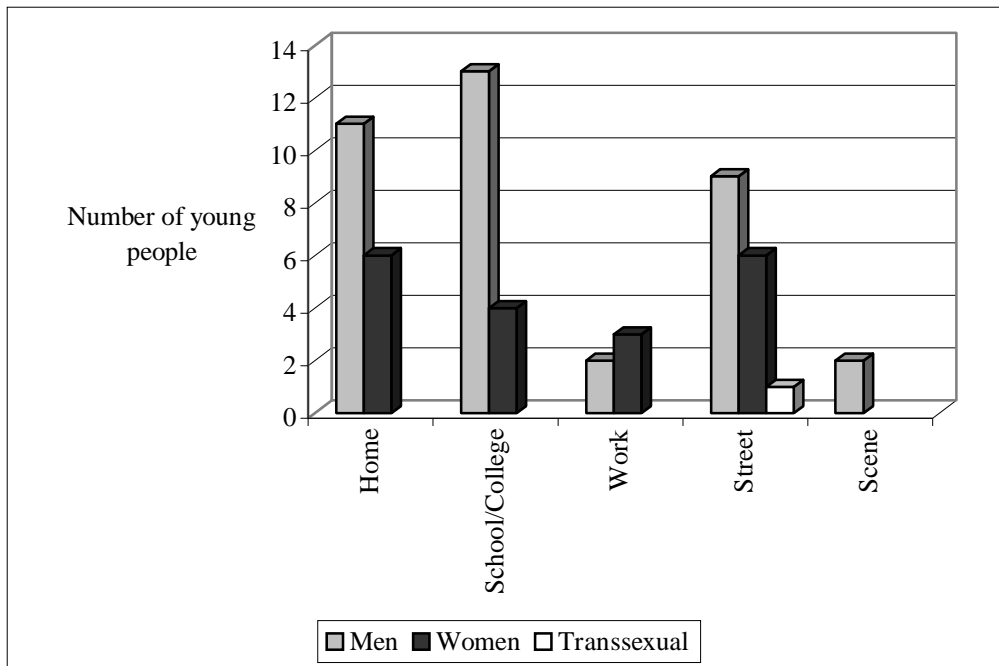
**Chart 36: Reason for the Physical Abuse as Identified by Respondents**



- Five per cent of respondents had been physically abused because of gender: two men, two women and one transsexual.
- One man had been physically abused because of his ethnic identity.
- Twenty-six per cent of respondents had been physically abused because of their sexual identity: 32 per cent of men, 17 per cent of women and one transsexual.
- Eight per cent of respondents had experienced domestic violence: eight per cent of men and nine per cent of women.
- Three per cent of respondents had been physically abused because of their mental health problem: one man and two women.

Chart 37 shows the place where the physical abuse occurred.

**Chart 37: Place the Physical Abuse Occurred as Identified by Respondents**



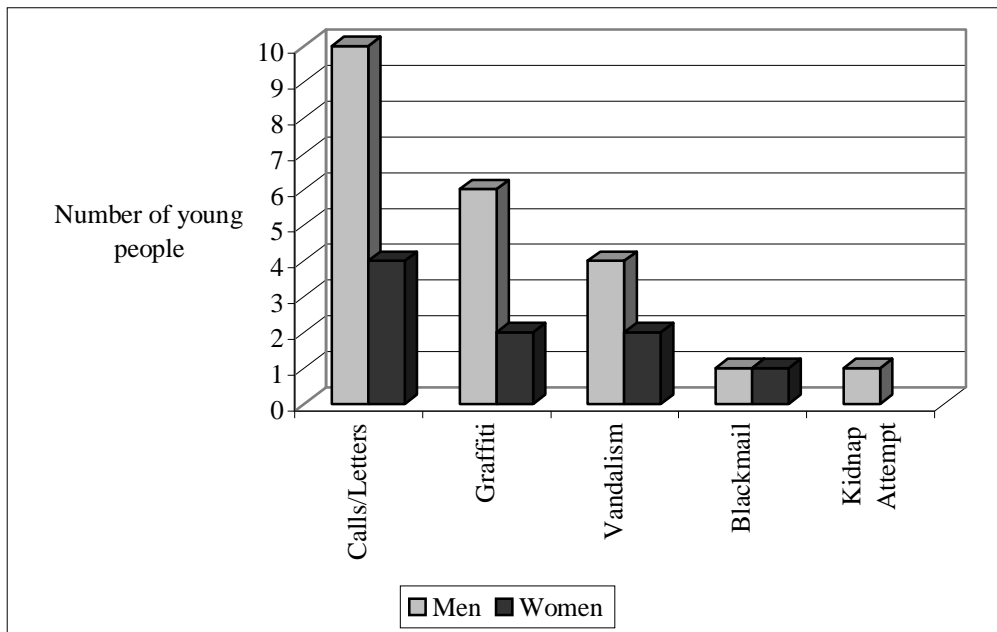
- Sixteen per cent of respondents had been physically abused at home: 18 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women.
  - Sixteen per cent had been physically abused at school or college: 22 per cent of men and nine per cent of women.
  - Five per cent had been physically abused at work: two men and three women.
  - Fifteen per cent had been physically abused on the street: 15 per cent of men, 13 per cent of women and one transsexual.
  - Two men were physically abused on the scene.
- 
- Only eight per cent of respondents reported the physical abuse to anyone: 12 per cent of men and two women.

## Harassment

- Twenty-six respondents (24 per cent) had been harassed: 15 men (25 per cent of men) and 11 women (24 per cent of women).

Chart 38 shows the type of harassment experienced by respondents.

**Chart 38: Type of Harassment Experienced by Respondents**

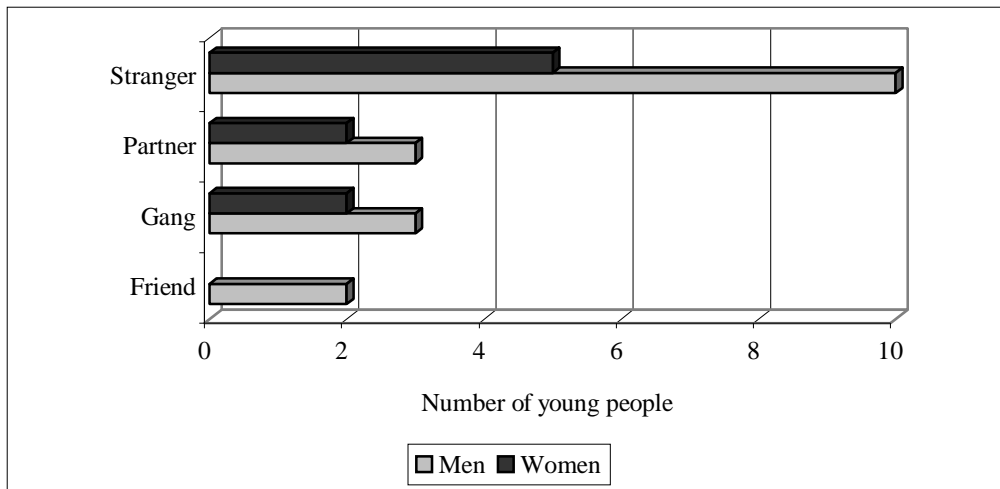


Note:  $n = 26$

- Thirteen per cent of respondents had received abusive calls or letters: 17 per cent of men and nine per cent of women.
- Seven per cent of respondents had experienced graffiti: ten per cent of men and two women.
- Six per cent of respondents had experienced vandalism: seven per cent of men and two women.

Chart 39 shows those responsible for the harassment.

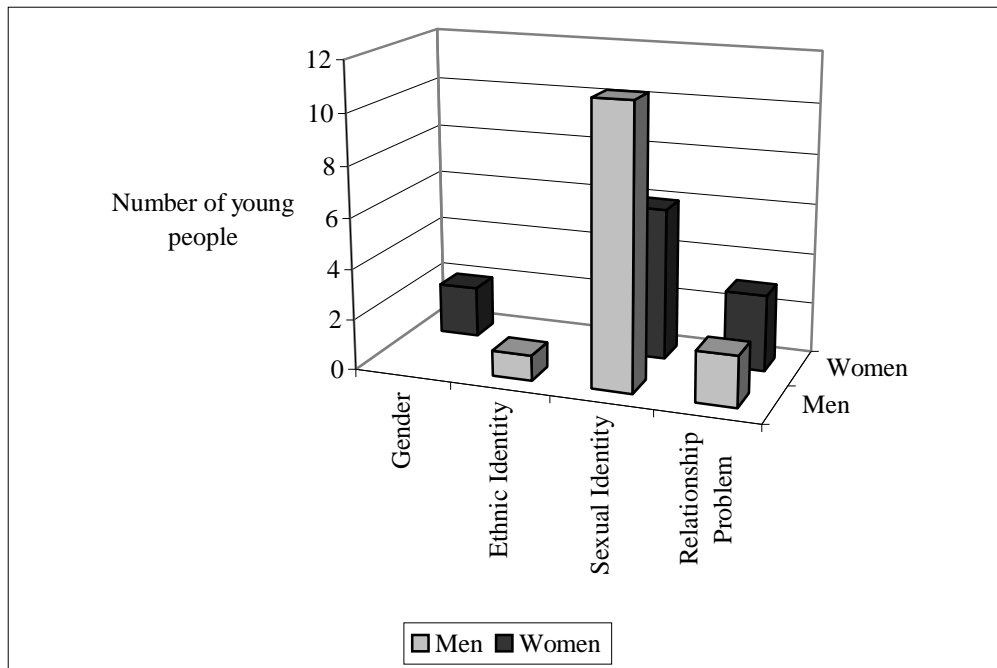
**Chart 39: Perpetrators of Harassment as Identified by Respondents**



- Two men had been harassed by a friend.
- Five per cent of respondents had been harassed by a gang: three men and two women.
- Five per cent of respondents had been harassed by a partner: three men and two women.
- Fourteen per cent of respondents had been harassed by a stranger: 17 per cent of men and 11 per cent of women.

Chart 40 shows the reasons why respondents had been harassed.

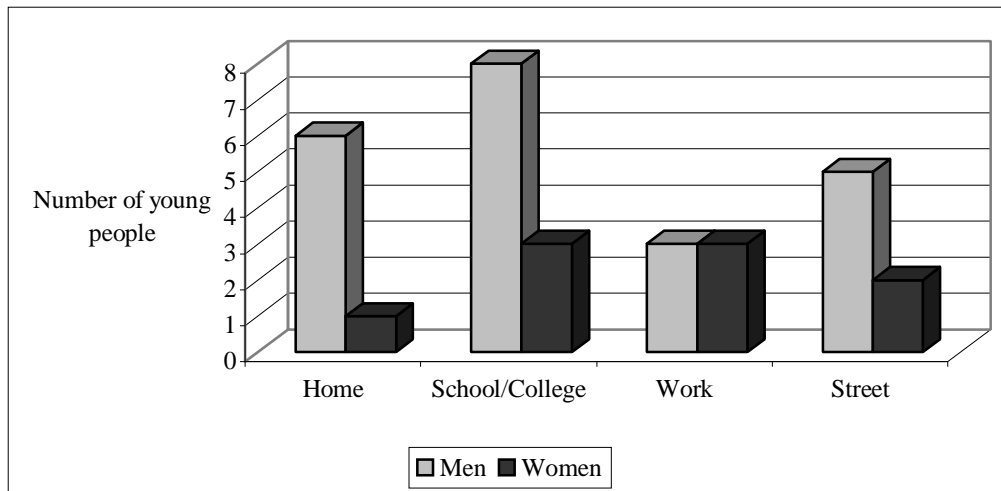
**Chart 40: Reasons why Respondents had been Harassed**



- Two women had been harassed because of their gender.
- One man had been harassed because of his ethnic identity.
- Sixteen per cent of respondents had been harassed because of their sexual identity: 18 per cent of men and 13 per cent of women.
- Five per cent of respondents had been harassed because of relationship breakdown: two men and three women.

Chart 41 shows the places where the harassment occurred.

**Chart 41: Places the Harassment Occurred as Identified by Respondents**



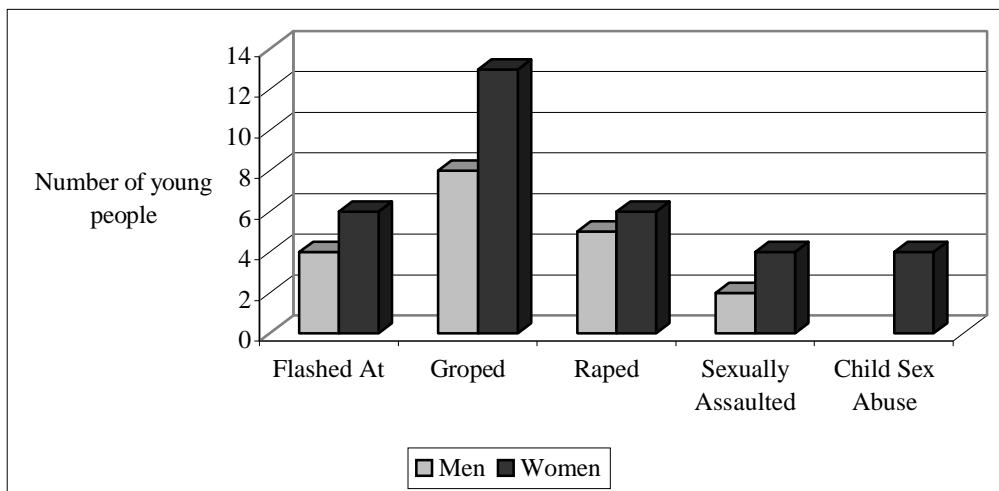
- Seven per cent of respondents had been harassed at home: six men and one woman.
- Ten per cent of respondents had been harassed at school or college: 13 per cent of men and seven per cent of women.
- Six per cent of respondents had been harassed at work: five per cent of men and seven per cent of women.
- Seven per cent of respondents had been harassed in the street: eight per cent of men and two women.
- Only five per cent of respondents reported harassment incidents to anyone: three men and two women.

## Sexual Abuse

- Thirty-four respondents (32 per cent) had been sexually abused: 15 men (25 per cent of men) and 19 women (41 per cent of women).

Chart 42 shows the type of sexual abuse experienced by respondents.

**Chart 42: Types of Sexual Abuse Experienced by Respondents**

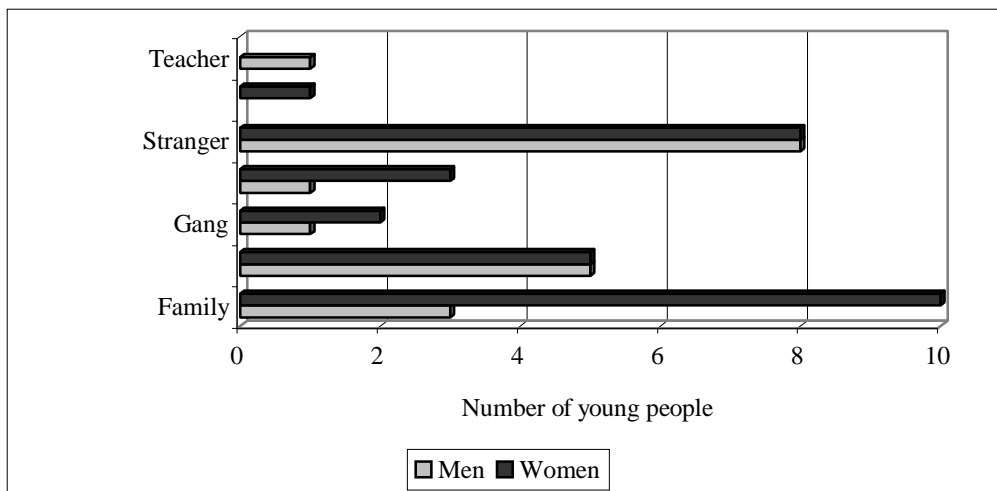


Note:  $n = 34$

- Nine per cent of respondents had been flashed at: seven per cent of men and 13 per cent of women.
- Twenty per cent of respondents had been groped: 13 per cent of men and 28 per cent of women.
- Ten per cent of respondents had been raped: eight per cent of men and 13 per cent of women.
- Seven per cent of respondents had been sexually assaulted: seven per cent of men and 11 per cent of women.
- Four women had experienced childhood sexual abuse.

Chart 43 shows those responsible for this sexual abuse.

**Chart 43: Perpetrators of Sexual Abuse as Identified by Respondents**

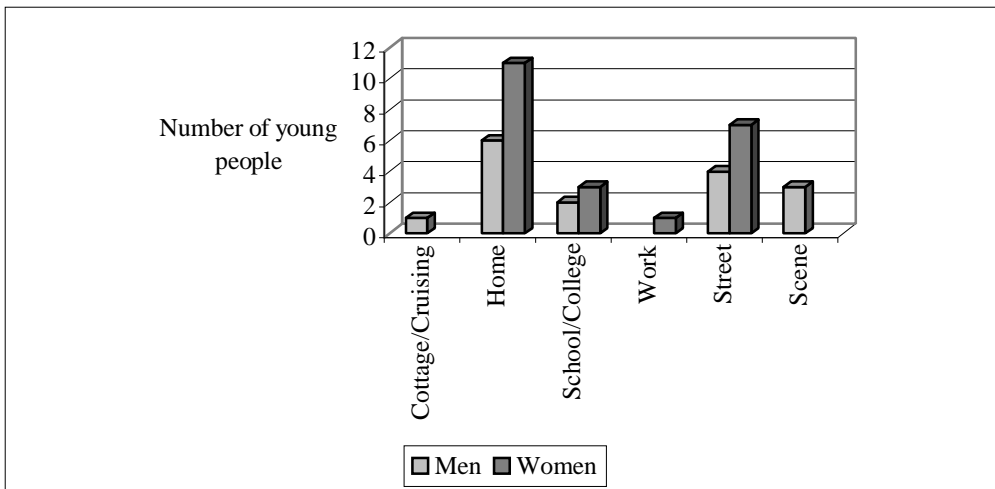


- Twelve per cent of respondents had been sexually abused by someone within their family: five per cent of men and 22 per cent of women.
- Nine per cent of respondents had been sexually abused by a friend: eight per cent of men and 11 per cent of women.
- Three per cent of respondents had been sexually abused by a gang: one man and two women.
- Four per cent of respondents had been sexually abused by a partner: one man and three women.
- Fifteen per cent of respondents had been sexually abused by a stranger: 13 per cent of men and 17 per cent of women.
- One man had been sexually abused by a teacher and one woman had been part of a paedophile ring.



Chart 44 shows the places where this sexual abuse occurred.

**Chart 44: Places the Sexual Abuse Occurred as Identified by Respondents**



- One man had been sexually abused at a cottage.
- Sixteen per cent of respondents had been sexually abused at home: ten per cent of men and 24 per cent of women.
- Five per cent of respondents had been sexually abused at school or college: two men and three women.
- One woman had been sexually abused at work.
- Ten per cent of respondents had been sexually abused on the street: seven per cent of men and 15 per cent of women.
- Three men had been sexually abused on the scene.
- Only nine per cent of respondents reported sexual abuse incidents to anyone: 13 per cent of men and 11 per cent of men.

### **Reporting Incidents: Verbal Abuse**

Those respondents who did report a verbal abuse incident did so to:

- Managers at work (one man and one woman).
- A police officer (one woman).
- Teachers at school (three men).

Those respondents who did not report a verbal abuse incident gave the following reasons why:

“It was not worth it.” (One woman.)

“The teachers were homophobic.” (One woman.)

“I didn’t want to out myself.” (One man.)

“No one would care.” (One man.)

“Fear.” (One man.)

“I didn’t think it would help.” (One man.)

### **Reporting Incidents: Physical Abuse**

Those respondents who did report a physical abuse incident did so to:

- Headteachers (three men).
- Police officers (one man and one woman).

Those respondents who did not report a physical abuse incident gave the following reasons why:

“Nobody would act.” (One woman.)

“The teachers were homophobic.” (One woman.)

“It was not worth it.” (One woman.)

“I was scared.” (One woman.)

“I was too ashamed.” (One woman.)

### **Reporting Incidents: Harassment**

Those respondents who did report a harassment incident did so to:

- A Headteacher (one man).
- Parents (one man).
- Police officers (two men and one woman).

### **Reporting Incidents: Sexual Abuse**

Those respondents who did report a sexual abuse incident did so to:

- Headteachers (one man and one woman).
- Parents (one woman).
- Police officers (two men and three women).

Those respondents who did not report a sexual abuse incident gave the following reasons why:

“I was too ashamed and embarrassed.” (One woman.)

“I was threatened by members of the family.” (One woman.)

“‘Date rape’ is not taken seriously.” (One woman.)

“I didn’t talk about the abuse for five years.” (One man.)

“I was too young, I was raped in a public toilet when I was ten years old.” (One man.)

### **Reporting Incidents to the Police**

- Only 12 per cent of respondents reported abuse, harassment and violence incidents to the police: 13 per cent of men and 11 per cent of women.

Respondents were asked about the response of police officers when they reported an incident. The following statements were made:

“There was no response. They didn’t want to know.” (One man.)

“I was raped by a police officer when I reported a previous rape.” (One woman.)

“They were supportive.” (Two men and two women.)

“They were supportive but the case didn’t get to court.” (One man.)

“They were supportive and they offered me Victim Support counselling.” (One man.)

“Polite but powerless.” (One man.)

“Good response.” (One man.)

### **Why Respondents did not Report Incidents to the Police**

Respondents were asked why they did not report incidents to the police. The following statements were made:

“It was not significant enough.” (Three men and one woman.)

“I could deal with it alone.” (One man.)

“It was not a police matter.” (One man.)

“The attacker was a friend.” (One man.)

“Because my partner was responsible for the incident.” (One man and One woman.)

“Because the police are not gay-friendly.” (One man.)

“Because I was not out.” (One man and one woman.)

“Because of the reputation of the police.” (One woman.)

“Because rape by a partner is not taken seriously.” (One woman.)

“Because I didn’t want the hassle.” (One transsexual.)

### **Who Respondents would Report Incidents to**

Respondents were asked about who they would report incidents to in future. The following statements were made:

“Friends.” (Four men and two women.)

“The police.” (Seven men and three women.)

“It would depend on how serious it was.” (One man and one woman.)

“Reading Lesbian and Gay Helpline.” (Two men and three women.)

“ReachOUT.” (Two men.)

### **Support Respondents would have liked Following an Incident**

Respondents were asked about what support they would have liked following an incident. The following statements were made:

“Recourse to legal protection.” (One transsexual.)

“To be treated as a victim.” (One woman.)

“To be believed.” (One woman.)

“Designated bisexual, gay or lesbian police officers, or a special unit.” (One woman.)

“Counselling services.” (One man and one woman.)

“Unbiased and supportive help.” (One woman.)

“For the police to be more sympathetic.” (Two men.)

“For the case to have gone to court.” (One man.)

“Emotional and mental support.” (One man.)

“Someone to talk it through with.” (One man.)

“Practical solutions.” (One man.)

### **Respondents' Fear of Crime**

Respondents were asked if, when and where they were fearful of crime. The following statements were made:

“I don't feel safe anywhere.” (One man.)

“In the town centre late at night.” (Seven men, twelve women and one transsexual.)

“At home.” (One man.)

“I feel unsafe all the time.” (Two men.)

“Being appraised for my ‘sex appeal’ as a woman.” (One woman.)

“I am fearful of the police.” (One woman.)

### **Respondents' General Comments**

Respondents made the following comments on the survey and/or the issues of homophobia and homophobic crime:

“I hope there is some action resulting from this survey.” (One woman.)

“Police should not harass those who cottage.” (One woman.)

“If police cannot deal with institutionalised racism, what chance have bisexual, gay and lesbian people got?” (One woman.)

“Schools should support the victims of homophobia.” (Two men.)

“People generally are not understanding of these issues.” (One man.)

“The police need training around homophobia and homophobia should be criminalised.” (One man.)

“Homophobic people need to be re-educated not convicted.” (One man.)

“We need a positive police presence in gay areas.” (One man.)

“The police are homophobic.” (One man.)

## **(d) Case Studies**

The following cases document several young people's experience of homophobia and homophobic crime.

### Case 1

In 1998, a young gay man was attacked in his home by two assailants. They beat him up and trashed his flat. After calling the police, two officers arrived. When the officers realised that the victim was gay, their attitude changed. Instead of treating the attack as a hate crime, they implied that the victim was somehow responsible for what had happened. They took a statement and then left him on his own. No attempt was made to ensure that the young man was safe, secure and supported. The attackers returned and the police were called again.

The follow-up to this incident was also lacking; the young man was not offered any information about Victim Support services and detectives failed to gather all the available evidence from the scene of the crime. This young man left his home to return to live with his parents because he was so fearful of the perpetrators returning.

This incident prompted the creation of the Berkshire Anti-Homophobia Group as it highlighted the underdeveloped links between the local bisexual, gay, lesbian and trans-gendered community and the police.

### Case 2

(This young man is now 28. He was 25 when these incidents began).

“The verbal abuse began when I moved in with my dad in Swindon in November 1995. It began with name calling and whistling in the street, probably because my partner at that time was a bit camp. It then progressed to comments and rubbish being left on my path and then on my door in the morning. I had been warned by my GP that I was heading for a breakdown because I had been working too hard, so all of this didn't help. This put a lot of pressure on my relationship, which was beginning to break down. The next door neighbour used to shout abuse, calling me a fucking queer, and she used to bang on the wall, day and night. If her kids wouldn't go to sleep, she used to say that 'the dirty queer will come and get you if you don't go to sleep'. Her four-year old was terrified of me. When I asked her what her problem was, she threatened to get her husband onto me, and he came round and called me names too, he called me a filthy pervert and threatened to beat me up. Very soon, everyone in the neighbourhood knew that I was gay. They used to talk to me, but when they found out that I am gay, they changed. They used to pull their children out of the way if they saw me coming.

The weekends when my dad was away were the worst, especially when people came back from the pubs on a Friday and Saturday night. The men used to stare threateningly. In the morning I used to find dog shit pushed through my letterbox. They used to box my car in so I couldn't get out. Then I would have to go round to their

houses and ask them to move it. They used to ignore my knocking and not answer the door.

One day, kids were jumping on my car. I chased them off and one of their fathers came at me, shouted abuse and threatened me with a crowbar. The next door neighbours used to spread lies and gossip and used to encourage their kids to verbally abuse me.

A gang of teenagers in Swindon town centre attacked me. They verbally abused me, again, calling me a fucking queer. I was getting sick of all this abuse and so I hit one of them.

I felt I was living on the edge of my nerves. My whole body language said 'leave me alone'. I was sometimes scared even to go out. I hid in the house for a week once when my dad was away. I developed a fear of large groups of people, of being singled out.

The dog shit through the letterbox continued. The banging on the wall continued. The verbal abuse and threats continued. One day I called the police. They were okay eventually, but at first they thought I was exaggerating. The local kids thought I was a monster. One kid told his father that I had tried to pull his trousers down. Nobody listened when I said that I was gay and not a paedophile. I was abused myself as a child.

I left work because someone had begun to spread rumours about me. No one wanted to talk to me. They just ignored me. My supervisor told me that I had no future in the job because I was gay.

I sometimes felt that I was losing it, losing my head. I began to shout back at the woman next door. I was sick of playing the role of a victim and I wanted to fight back.

I went to the press and made a statement to a journalist. She didn't publish because she didn't want to bring even more trouble for me by highlighting the case.

I became very ill, and began to suffer from paranoia. The Christmas of 1996 was the worse. The kids next door were singing horrible songs and chants about me. The dad next door then said he was going to give me 'a Christmas present'. It was a piece of wood he was going to hit me with. My dad asked them all to leave me alone, and told me to just ignore what they said and did.

I was attacked one day in the job centre. This is because I had become well known in the town. Again they verbally abused me, pushed me and then went for me. I hit them back. The police were called and split us up. They were waiting for me outside, chanting that they were going to get me in town.

My dad couldn't cope and he asked me to leave. I stayed at a friend's house for a few weeks, occasionally sleeping in my car to get some space. I sold most of my possessions to get by. I approached the local Gay Men's Health Worker for help. My GP said that I was a danger to myself, by this time I was feeling suicidal. All my plans for my life were being thwarted and I felt that there was little I could do. I had also become terrified of being followed.

Reading Borough Council's Housing Department found me a temporary flat in Tilehurst. Unfortunately for me, the previous tenant knew my ex-next door neighbour in



Swindon. The harassment began again. My car was attacked, rubbish was pushed through the letterbox and the local kids used to lie that I had touched them up and that they'd get their dads onto me.

One morning a man came to the door. He said he knew who and what I was. He accused me of being queer and a paedophile. He threatened to break in to my flat and steal all my belongings. I pushed him down the path and out of the gate at this point. Then he invited me to come down the road to meet his mates, that they really wanted to meet me. He went off, and I went inside to get a crowbar. This vigilante response was because I was getting so desperate. Then some of them came up the road. One was carrying a big block of concrete and the other a wooden post. The concrete was thrown at me, grazing my face. The post was thrust into my ribs and I dropped the crowbar. I was then repeatedly hit with the post and crowbar. They also kicked me in the head and my back. One of the gang said, 'Don't kill him'. Then another said, 'Why? He's only a queer'. Two elderly neighbours screamed at them to stop (they were later too scared to come forward as witnesses of the attack). I tried to get up but my legs and arms were numb. My sight was also going. It was all blurred. I went down the road to get help from a friend. Meanwhile, they threatened me, telling me that they were going to come back and give me some more. I got to my friend's house and collapsed. He called the police. I was taken to hospital and later the police station. The police advised him to move out of the area and that they were onto this gang for other offences. My friend wanted me to stay, but I knew I wouldn't be safe. I tried to get a council transfer to Reading, but they couldn't help me because I did not have any local connections. Basingstoke District Council was able to help, and I moved to Kingsclere.

Here the abuse continued, from a neighbour (once he found out I was gay) and from local kids. I lost my job because kids trashed my car and I couldn't get to work. I was becoming more and more paranoid and I used to play up that I was a mental case so that people would be wary of me and would leave me alone.

In September of 1997 I went to court to prosecute one of the attackers. He went down for 12 months. I was also warned never to go back to Swindon because I would be killed.

In May 1998 I had a breakdown and was diagnosed with mild schizophrenia. I was also put on medication. The consultants in the mental health system initially didn't believe me. They thought I was making it up and thought that I had always had schizophrenia. They said it was all to do with me smoking cannabis occasionally. But my mental health problem was because of all the things that had happened to me.

It was mental torture and I thought I was going mad when all this stuff was going on. I just wanted to die. It was all too much, the humiliation, being branded a paedophile, etc.

It almost sounds unbelievable doesn't it? All of this nearly destroyed me. But I know of worse incidents, against friends and other people I know.

My life is improving now. I live in Reading with a supportive partner. My neighbours are supportive too and I feel relatively safe. Hopefully things will carry on getting better."

### Case 3

In 1997, a young gay man was attacked after being followed from a bar in Reading town centre. He was seriously beaten up and set on fire with a lighter. Several layers of clothes fused with his skin and he was hospitalised with third-degree burns. This incident was not reported.

### Case 4

In 1998, a young gay man was raped in a cruising area in Reading town centre at night. As this young gay man had a partner, he did not want to prosecute for fear that his partner would find out about where he was.

### Case 5

In response to ReachOUT's Local Secondary Schools Survey, a Headteacher stated that a young gay man had left school early and unexpectedly because of the bullying he had experienced. The bullying was so severe that he required medical attention.

### Case 6

ReachOUT's research interviews with young bisexuals, gays and lesbians in 1998 found that several had experienced bullying at school. Some of these young people experienced severe and systematic bullying, to the point where they were playing truant to avoid it. Consequently, their academic development was affected. None of these young people reported the bullying to anyone for fear that it would get worse (see Section 3.1.5).

### Case 7

Over the past two years, ReachOUT has organised three self-defence workshops for the young people, following requests from them. These young people often complained of being fearful on the streets, especially at night and when leaving gay venues.

## **(e) Discussion**

The Campaign for Homosexual Equality (1980) conducted a study of homophobia between 1977-80. They recorded 250 incidents of which 15 per cent had resulted in the death or disablement of the victim.

Trenchard and Warren's (1984) survey of 416 young gay men and lesbians in London found that 45 per cent had experienced problems at school because of their sexual identity, 58 per cent had been verbally abused and 21 per cent had been physically assaulted. Forty-one per cent of the men had cottaged or cruised and eight young men had been in contact with the police for cottaging, seven for soliciting.

Derbyshire (1990) noted the number of convictions for possession of obscene materials for gain tripled between 1979-88. Clubs, sex theatres, shops, cottages and cruising areas had been raided. Surveillance operations had become more extensive and more officers were being assigned to such operations. Convictions for indecency increased from 826 in 1985 to 1,496 in 1988. Convictions for importuning increased from 482 in 1985 to 699 in 1988. Convictions for other sexual offences increased from 1,051 in 1985 to 1,148 in 1988.

Tatchell (1990) reported Home Office statistics revealing that 2,948 men were convicted or cautioned in England and Wales during 1988 for consenting homosexual behaviour (gross indecency, soliciting and importuning, procuring and buggery). In addition, an estimated 1,000 were convicted or cautioned under local authority and public transport bylaws (including an estimated 200 prosecuted under public order and indecency laws), giving a total of 3,948 men. Furthermore, there was a high conviction and caution rate in 1988: 90 per cent of cases. Tatchell argued that this amounted to the large-scale criminalisation of bisexual and gay men.

GALOP (Gay and Lesbian Policing Initiative) conducted a survey at Lesbian and Gay Pride 1991 and found that 41 per cent of gay men had experienced physical assault. GALOP conducted another survey at the 1992 Lesbian and Gay Pride Festival and found that 40 per cent of gay men and 25 per cent of lesbians had experienced physical assault. Eighty per cent of men and 72 per cent of women had experienced verbal abuse. Twenty-three per cent of men and 30 per cent of women had reported incidents to the police and of these, 35 per cent found the police indifferent, 16 per cent found them incompetent and 22 per cent experienced harassment whilst reporting the incident (cited in Derbyshire, 1994).

The Lewisham Safer Cities' survey of violence against gay men (1992) involved 242 men. Eighty-one per cent had experienced verbal abuse, 45 per cent reported having been physically assaulted (40 per cent required medical attention afterwards). Of the perpetrators of violence, 19 per cent were unknown groups and 12 per cent unknown individuals. Only 16 per cent reported incidents to the police. Thirty-two per cent worried 'about violence', 43 per cent said their fear of assault had increased and 55 per cent felt violence against gay men had increased (cited in Derbyshire, 1994).

Project Sigma's study of 387 gay men found that 68 per cent had experienced verbal abuse for being gay and 24 per cent had experienced physical assault (three had been knifed). All but one of these assaults involved male assailants (often multiple

assailants) and most had been perpetrated by strangers. Twenty-one assaults occurred on the street, 19 outside gay venues and 16 at cottages and cruising areas. Very few men reported incidents to the police (cited in Derbyshire, 1994).

Richardson (1994) reported that there were 155 murders of gay men and three murders of lesbians between 1986-94. The overall unsolved murder rate is ten per cent per year but 22 per cent of gay murders remained unsolved. Two-thirds of gay murders occur in the victim's home, three per cent in cottages, ten per cent on the street and ten per cent in cruising areas.

Truman *et al* (1994) surveyed 178 gay men and lesbians in Manchester who had been the victims of crime. Thirty-eight per cent of men and 21 per cent of women said they had been 'queer bashed' (cited in Mason and Palmer, 1996).

Fahey (1995) surveyed 105 gay men and lesbians in higher education settings. Forty per cent felt isolated, 39 per cent had suffered verbal abuse and four per cent physical assault.

McColl's (1995) survey of youth workers asked them to cite the major sources of distress and their consequences for the bisexual, gay and lesbian young people they worked with. Bullying and physical abuse were cited as sources of distress for 35 per cent of the young people.

Mason and Palmer (1996) cited the Social and Community Planning Research sample of 116 representative bisexuals, gay men and lesbians from the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles. Of these, 43 per cent had experienced verbal abuse and 25 per cent had been either physically assaulted or threatened.

Stonewall conducted a national survey of hate crimes against bisexuals, gays and lesbians in which 4,000 people participated. Thirty-four per cent of men and 24 per cent of women had experienced homophobic violence, 32 per cent had been harassed, 12 per cent had been threatened, six per cent had experienced vandalism, 73 per cent had experienced verbal abuse and four per cent had received hate mail. Nineteen per cent of the sample had been harassed by people unknown to them, eight per cent by colleagues and six per cent by neighbours. Only 37 per cent reported incidents to the police. A lower percentage of those aged under 18 reported incidents to the police (because of the age of consent and fear of prosecution). Of these young people, 48 per cent had experienced violence, 61 per cent had been harassed and 90 per cent had experienced verbal abuse. Fifty per cent of violent assaults involved fellow students and 40 per cent occurred at school, 24 per cent of assaults were perpetrated by fellow students, 44 per cent of harassment was from fellow students and 79 per cent of verbally abuse came from fellow students. The parents and families of these young people were responsible for five per cent of assaults, 14 per cent of harassment and 19 per cent of verbal abuse (Mason and Palmer, 1996).

Nayak and Kehily (1996) found in their study that homophobic practices were regarded by teachers and pupils as natural and routine activities in the developing lives of young gay men (cited in Douglas *et al*, 1997).

A survey of 307 secondary schools in England and Wales by Douglas *et al* (1997) found that 82 per cent of teachers were aware of homophobic verbal bullying and 26 per cent were aware of homophobic physical bullying in their schools. Ninety-nine per cent

of these schools had a bullying policy but only six per cent of policies made any reference to young bisexual, gay and lesbian pupils. Ninety-eight per cent of schools had equal opportunity and confidentiality policies but only 25 per cent included young bisexual, gay and lesbian pupils. Sixty-one per cent of teachers were aware of bisexuals, gays and lesbians in their schools and 42 per cent had been approached by these young people for advice and support. In terms of teachers and schools addressing homophobic bullying, the most frequently cited factors felt to hinder efforts were: worries about parental disapproval (22 per cent), lack of experienced staff (15 per cent) and a lack of policies (14 per cent).

Smith (1997) reported that in the early 1990s, gay men were murdered at a rate of one every fortnight and 2,000 men were charged with public sex offences every year.

GALOP (1998) conducted a survey into homophobia against young bisexuals, gays and lesbians completed by 202 people aged under 25 (31 per cent identified as bisexual and lesbian women, 68 per cent as bisexual and gay men, 11 per cent as Asian, ten per cent as Black and eight per cent as disabled). Eighty-three per cent had experienced verbal abuse, 47 per cent had experienced physical abuse, 41 per cent had experienced sexual abuse (including being groped, flashed at, indecently assaulted and raped) and 31 per cent had been harassed. Only 19 per cent reported incidents to the police. Of these, 33 per cent said that the police had been supportive in their response, 13 per cent said that they had been hostile and 51 per cent said that they had been indifferent.

Rivers' (1998) sample of 140 bisexuals, gays and lesbians found that 82 per cent had experienced name calling at school, 71 per cent had been ridiculed, 60 per cent had been hit or kicked, 58 per cent had been teased, 59 per cent had been the subject of rumours, 49 per cent experienced theft, 52 per cent has been frightened by a look or stare and 40 per cent had attempted suicide.

Hickson *et al* (1998), through their National Gay Men's Sex Survey in 1997, found that 37 per cent (of 581 men) had experienced hate crime in the last five years. Of those that had been assaulted or attacked, 50 per cent (18 per cent of all the men) indicated this had happened more than once and 25 per cent (nine per cent of all the men) indicated it had happened four times or more. The survey also found that younger men were more likely to experience hate crime than older men and more often. Furthermore, the survey revealed that only 15 per cent reported incidents to the police, and a third of these received a poor service.

In terms of local studies, OXAIDS (1997) conducted a survey with 221 bisexuals, gays and lesbians in Oxford. Twenty per cent of respondents felt relations between the police and local bisexual, gay and lesbian community was poor or very bad. Forty-seven per cent said they would not be happy contacting the police about an incident. Thirty-one per cent had been subject to homophobic abuse, harassment and/or violence. Twenty-three per cent of these incidents had occurred on the streets. Only 17 per cent had reported the incident to the police and 67 per cent said they would have felt happier reporting the incident to a bisexual, gay and lesbian organisation.

The Berkshire Anti-Homophobia Group study found that 70 per cent of respondents (aged 25 and under) had been verbally abused, 39 per cent had been physically abused, 24 per cent had been harassed and 32 per cent had been sexually abused. Most of these incidents occurred on the street and were perpetrated by gangs

and strangers. However, a significant number of incidents occurred at home, at school or college, at work or on the scene, perpetrated by members of the family, friends or partners. There were no significant differences in terms of gender; men and women were both likely to have experienced homophobia and homophobic crime.

Figure 36 shows how the findings from the youth sample compare to the total sample and to other studies.

**Figure 36: Comparisons of the Levels of Homophobia and Homophobic Crime**

	<b>Berkshire Anti-Homophobia Group: Youth Sample</b>	<b>Berkshire Anti-Homophobia Group: Total Sample</b>	<b>Other British Studies (1)</b>
Verbal Abuse	70%	65%	65%
Physical Abuse	39%	30%	35%
Harassment	24%	23%	47%
Sexual Abuse	32%	26%	
Level of Reporting of Incidents to the Police	12%	12%	27%

Note: (1) Mean figure of thirteen studies conducted in British cities and towns between 1980-97.

The Berkshire Anti-Homophobia Group study found that young people were more likely to experience harassment and verbal, physical and sexual abuse compared to the total sample of all ages. The study also found that the levels of homophobia and homophobic crime were comparable to other studies. A significant difference however, was the level of reporting to the police. The level of reporting in the other areas of Britain where studies were conducted was twice as high as in Berkshire.

A majority of respondents who had reported incidents to the police found that they were helpful and supportive. Only a minority stated that they received a hostile or indifferent response. When asked about who they would report incidents to in the future, most said the police. However, when those respondents who did not report were asked why, several perceived that the response of the police would be hostile and unsympathetic. Given that this was confirmed in a minority of cases it is easy to see how this becomes the common view held by many members of the bisexual, gay, lesbian and trans-gendered community.

Several respondents stated that they would rather report future incidents to bisexual, gay and lesbian organisations rather than the police, indicating the need for a choice in terms of reporting. Several respondents requested counselling and one-to-one support services, support from schools and designated bisexual, gay and lesbian police officers. Many respondents were fearful of crime in the town centre late at night.

Evidence from this study and others suggests that bisexual, gay, lesbian and trans-gendered victims are highly likely to have experienced homophobia and homophobic crime but are often reluctant to report incidents to the police or other authorities. This is plainly reflected in the high levels of abuse, harassment and violence and the low level of reporting.

In terms of the reluctance to report, several factors seem to be at play:

- Victims of homophobia and homophobic crime often seem to lack confidence and trust in the police, perceiving them as homophobic.
- Victims often seem to fear the consequences of reporting (coming out and being outed).
- Victims seem to worry about what will happen to the information they disclose, and if records are kept, what the long-term implications may be (on employment, etc.).
- Some victims may not feel able to report incidents because they were offending at the time (cottaging and cruising). Reporting may result in *their* prosecution.

Reporting, and the reluctance to report, are obviously central issues to beginning to tackle the problems of homophobia and homophobic crime – which can be categorised as ‘hidden crime’ (alongside domestic violence and racist incidents) given the widespread silence of the victims. When homophobia and homophobic crime are not reported, they go unchallenged. Under- or non-reporting also helps to create the myth that they are non-issues and this is plainly refuted by the evidence.

It should also be noted that bisexual, gay, lesbian and trans-gendered people are not just the victims of abuse, harassment and violence, they can also be the perpetrators. This study found several cases of same-sex domestic violence and a number of abuse, harassment and violence incidents perpetrated by bisexuals, gays and lesbians. It is therefore not helpful to see this community one-dimensionally, that is, cast in the role of victim.

Tackling homophobic abuse, harassment and violence – which are hate crimes – is not just a matter of social justice, it is also a quality-of-service issue. Bisexual, gay, lesbian and trans-gendered people should be able to expect the same quality of service from the police (and other agencies charged with individual and community safety) as other sections of society expect.