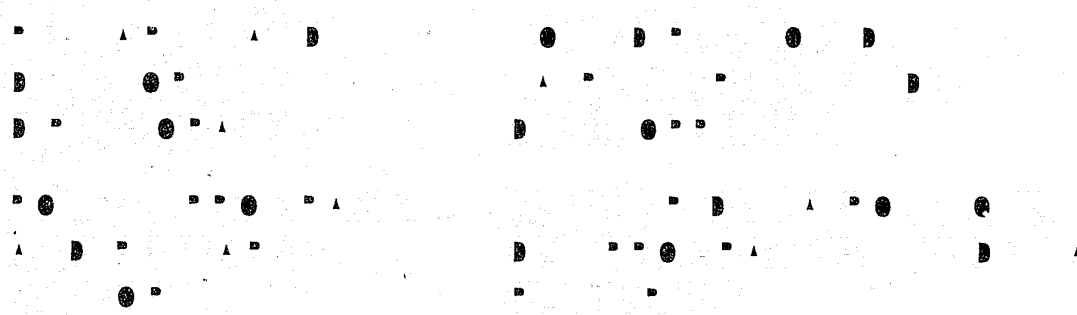
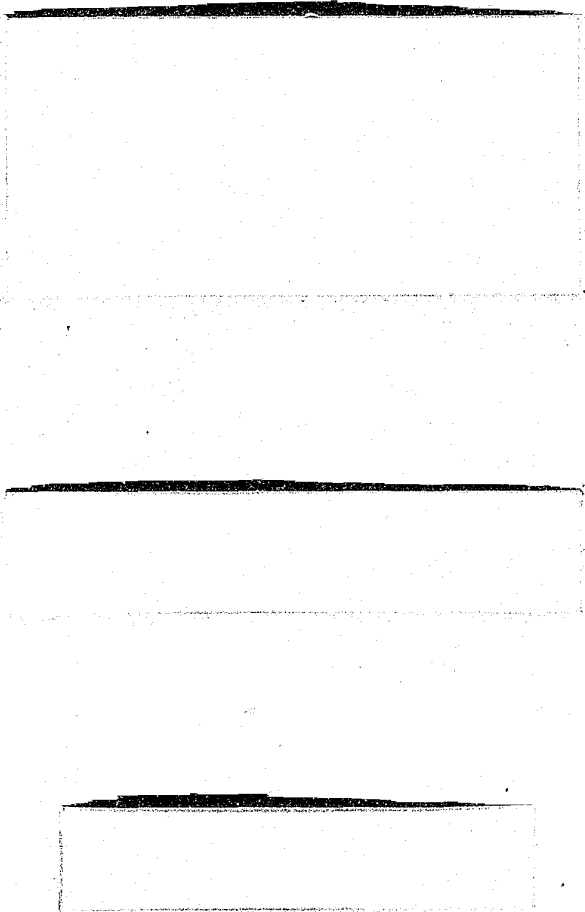


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**WIFE ASSAULT AS A CRIME:  
THE PERSPECTIVES OF VICTIMS  
AND POLICE OFFICERS  
ON A CHARGING POLICY  
IN LONDON, ONTARIO  
FROM 1980-1990**

**London Family Court Clinic Inc.**

**April 1991**

**WD1991-13a**

**NCJRS  
AUG 28 1992  
ACQUISITIONS**

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*NOTE: The following is a list of all the Appendices contained in the original version of this Report. To save duplicating expenses, Appendices A to G have not been reproduced in the present version. Complete copies of all the appendices are available from the Department of Justice Canada upon request.*

- Appendix A Directive of the London City Police Force
- Appendix B Letter from the London Police Force
- Appendix C Advertisement
- Appendix D Victim Interview Form
- Appendix E Victim Code Sheet
- Appendix F Police Survey
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present study addressed the effectiveness of police officers laying charges in cases of wife assault when the police have reasonable and probable grounds to believe that an assault has taken place. The effectiveness of this policy was assessed by interviewing 90 women in London, Ontario who had been physically abused by their partner and received one of three interventions (1. police intervention/charges laid, 2. police intervention/no charges laid, 3. no police intervention/no charges laid). Research findings indicate that victims had a high level of satisfaction with police officers' interventions and reported a significant reduction in violence when criminal charges were laid by the police. The small sample size did not allow for an analysis of a meaningful interaction between police and other community interventions (e.g., specialized social services).

The effectiveness of the policy was also assessed by examining police data on the number of charges laid and a survey of police officer's attitudes in regard to the importance and impact of the directive to lay charges in cases of wife assault. The policy was shown to be implemented in a dramatic fashion. Between 1979 (prepolicy) and 1990 the rate of charges had increased from 2.7 per cent to 89.9 per cent of wife assault occurrences. Over a four year period between 1987 and 1990 officers were significantly less inclined to leave the responsibility for laying charges with victims. The change in laying charges was paralleled by more positive police attitudes on the importance of the policy and their perceived support from victims and the courts.

The court response to the charges indicated a continuing trend for fewer cases being dismissed or withdrawn in comparison to previous years. The police charges led to a significant increase in more serious court sentences (probation, incarceration) than in previous years, especially in contrast to victim-laid charges (Jaffe & Burris, 1981). Although the charges led to a significant reduction in the violence that victims reported, the fear of violence continued. During the court process one-half of the victims continued to fear for their safety and one-quarter were threatened by the batterer. Many victims indicated a need for greater awareness of their plight in the community, through public awareness (42 per cent). Over one-quarter of the victims (28 per cent) suggested that the police offer more information in regard to the court process and available community services.

The limitations in generalizing the study's findings were discussed in terms of the progressive nature of the London Police Force and the coordinated community response to violence against women in London. Limitations were also discussed in regard to the small sample size and the small number of participants who represented visible minorities.



Recommendations and implications of the study include:

1. Feedback should be offered to the London Police Force on the successful implementation of the charging policy. A review of the information offered to victims by police officers in regard to court process and community services should be considered.
2. The research findings should be shared with other police forces across Canada. Appropriate federal and provincial government ministries could examine the consistency of the laying of charges in cases of wife assault. Previous research suggests an uneven application of the charging policy across different jurisdictions (e.g., Leighton, 1989).
3. The research findings should be shared with police colleges and provincial justice institutes across Canada to better inform instructors and new recruits. As well, police should receive ongoing inservice on the impact of laying charges in cases of wife assault.
4. Future research should be funded by appropriate federal and provincial government ministries to examine the following.
  - (a) The response of police forces in other communities in Canada matched as much as possible in size and makeup to London, Ontario. The response of other police forces should be assessed by comparable interviews with victims, surveys of officers and data collection on wife assault charges and wife assault occurrences.
  - (b) The current study should be replicated with a larger sample size to allow a comparison of various police interventions by themselves as well as interactions with other community supports such as specialized services for victims and perpetrators of violence (e.g., Dutton, 1988).
  - (c) Since the current study had a low number of victims representing visible minorities, it is difficult to draw conclusions vis a vis this population. Future studies need to develop effective strategies to engage persons representing visible minorities in a similar study in order to identify the special needs of this population.
  - (d) Since the police are the front line of the criminal justice system, their ultimate effectiveness is dependent on the

sensitive and skilled intervention of crown attorneys and judges. Future research should explore victims' satisfaction with the court process and the impact of the court on recidivism of wife assault.

5. The present study reinforces the importance of public education and a high level of awareness on the part of front line professionals (e.g., family doctors, clergy) on the issue of abused women. Victims are most likely to turn to friends and relatives for support and the initial responses they receive may be crucial in reducing the likelihood of further violence. It is interesting to note that current primary prevention programs initiated by the London Co-ordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse, in collaboration with the Board of Education for the City of London, have in part focused on the importance of peer support and the sensitivity of students' responses to peers living with violence at home or in dating relationships (Jaffe, Reitzel, Sudermann & Killip, 1990).
6. The importance of specialized services that are geared to the needs of battered women are underlined by the degree to which these services are considered "very helpful" by victims of violence.
7. Canadian police forces should clearly communicate their charging policy on behalf of all victims of violence. This communication is especially important in light of previous studies that suggest victims do not believe that the police can do anything in cases of wife assault. Ultimately the same community response to other social issues (e.g., drinking and driving) needs to be developed for violence against women.
8. It is important to remember that the police charging policy is not a "quick fix" for the issue of woman abuse. Although victims report a significant reduction in violence associated with the laying of charges, many victims report ongoing fears and actual threats from their partner during the court process. Communities need to examine the level of support and protection available to victims before, during, and after the laying of charges. The community response to victims through the criminal justice system needs to be examined as a coordinated intervention rather than piecemeal policies (Prairie Research Associates, 1990).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present study required a high level of collaboration with the London community. The London Police Force facilitated the data collection in every way possible through the assistance of the Chief of Police, Laverne Shipley, Superintendent George Brunton, Inspector Brian Crump, Sergeant John O'Flaherty and Mr. Eldon Amoroso. Anne Telford (project coordinator for the previous (1989) study) played an important consulting role in initiating the research procedures.

The London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse (formerly known as the London Coordinating Committee on Family Violence) acted as a steering committee through the Direct Services Sub-committee chaired by Ms Sandra Savage. We appreciate the advice and direction that we received from Committee members which represented the following agencies: Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic, Changing Ways, Family Service London, Women's Community House, Madame Vanier Children's Services, Second Stage Housing, Probation and Parole Services, Family Consultant Service, Sexual Assault Centre, London and the London Family Court Clinic. The London Cultural Interpretation Service provided interpreters for participants who did not speak English.

The research funders through their officials and program supervisors (Scott Clark, Ari Dassanayake, Joan Fisher, Ruth Pitman, Jeeti Sahota and Jacques de Verteuil) offered considerable support and valuable suggestions in the design and completion of the research.

A number of London Family Court Clinic staff played a vital role in a variety of complex tasks that this study required. Interviews of victims were completed with great skill and sensitivity by Elaine Hastings, Deborah Reitzel, Karen Rhiger, Karen Scott, Carol Thornton, Jacqueline Vandenboomen, Linda Vank, Isabel von Wahl and Barbara Woodhead.

Most importantly, we acknowledge the 97 abused women who volunteered to participate in this study in order that future victims of violence could benefit from the most effective police interventions.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

When average Canadians think about violent crime, it is likely that they wonder about the safety of our streets. Home is likely considered a safe and nurturing haven. The reality is quite different for too many Canadian women. Without minimizing the impact of violence perpetrated by strangers, the fact is that Canadian women are most likely to be assaulted by the man they love (or have loved) (MacLeod, 1987). The majority of women murdered in Canada, died as a result of wife assault (Ontario Women's Directorate, 1990; Prairie Research Associates, 1990). On average two women were killed by their partner every week during 1990 (Canadian Press, 1990). One recent study found that women were 13 times more likely to be abused in their own home than by a stranger on the streets (The London Family Court Clinic, 1990). This violence tends to be under-reported with an estimated one in seventy actually coming to the attention of the police (Dutton, 1988). Although the causes and solutions to this violence are complex issues, public awareness and the informed response of the criminal justice system are crucial community interventions.

Within the past decade, Canadian society has accepted the reality that "wife assault is a crime". During the 1970s considerable documentation through research and the popular press indicated that women who were assaulted in their own homes were treated as second-class victims of violence (MacLeod, 1987; Jaffe & Burris, 1981). Police officers rarely laid charges except in the most extreme circumstances that involved life-threatening injuries and the use of weapons. However, public awareness, lobby groups and federal/provincial government hearings on family violence in the 1980s concluded that the status quo had to change. Women assaulted by their partners were seen to be victims that had a fundamental right to police protection and personal safety. It was suggested that these victims should not be left to defend themselves, but rather the police forces across the country should lay charges under the Criminal Code of Canada. Victims were not to seek individual, civil solutions to the violence, but rather law enforcement professionals were to act on behalf of all citizens to indicate that wife assault would not be tolerated or deemed a lesser offence.

"Wife assault is a crime" has become a national focus with a clear commitment from federal and provincial governments. Various government ministries responsible for the justice system have made major efforts to improve awareness and sensitivity of law enforcement professionals on the plight of abused women. At the cornerstone of these initiatives is the clear directive that police should lay charges in cases of wife assault when they have reasonable and probable grounds to believe that an assault took place. In a similar vein, crown attorneys have been directed to prosecute wife assault cases with the same vigour as other criminal proceedings dealing with violence. Parallel initiatives have recently been announced to create greater sensitivity on the part of judges to deal with these complex matters (Schmitz, 1991).

Although there has been widespread agreement that the "wife assault is a crime" trend in the criminal justice system is a commendable shift in attitude, there has been very little research to examine the effectiveness of this policy. Preliminary research in London, Ontario - one of the first police forces in North America to have a formal policy in regard to wife assault - indicates several important findings that call into question several traditional myths in this field. (Burriss & Jaffe, 1983; Jaffe, Wolfe, Telford & Austin, 1986).

**Myth 1:** Police officers rarely have reasonable and probable grounds that an assault has taken place.

**Finding:** Police officers had reasonable and probable grounds in over 30 times as many cases as they had been laying charges for before the policy directive.

**Myth 2:** Victims will not cooperate with the justice system in testifying against their partner.

**Finding:** Victims were more likely to follow through on court appearances and court testimony when the police laid charges compared to victims laying a private information (victim laid charge).

**Myth 3:** Victim's lack of cooperation will lead to most charges being dismissed or withdrawn.

**Finding:** Fewer cases were dismissed or withdrawn during court proceedings when police laid charges.

**Myth 4:** Laying charges has no impact on violent behaviour.

**Finding:** Victims reported a significant reduction in violence after police laid charges.

Although these initial trends were encouraging vis à vis the effectiveness of the charging policy several cautions remained. These included:

1. the importance of monitoring victims' satisfaction over a longer period of time;
2. monitoring police behaviour and attitudes in regards to the policy;
3. examining the possibility that victims would hesitate reporting new incidents of violence to police because of the policy or that the policy may "cause" greater violence on the part of the offender; and,

4. investigation of preliminary feedback from victims and police officers which suggested a lack of support from the courts after the charges had been laid.

The present research was undertaken to address some of these concerns. First and foremost the research study sought to examine the views of assaulted women and police officers on the impact and effectiveness of the charging policy. By completing the study in London, Ontario the research team hoped to be able to compare the data collected to two previous studies in London on the response of the justice system to assaulted women (Jaffe et al., 1986; Jaffe & Burris, 1981). The present study presented a unique opportunity to examine changes over a decade on the laying of charges in cases of wife assault as well as changes in the perceptions of victims and police officers. One major extension in the scope of the current study was the solicitation of victims from the community who had not had police intervention after an assault by their partner. This group of women were sought to offer comparative insights about the patterns of violence without any police intervention. As well, we hoped to ascertain the existence of victims who may hesitate to contact the police because of their knowledge that assault charges would be laid.

Before we examine the research design and methodology in the current study it is important to offer some background information on the London community and the nature of special services available for victims and perpetrators of woman abuse.

#### **1.1 The Integrated Community Response to Woman Abuse in London, Ontario**

The city of London occupies 70.03 square miles in Southwestern Ontario, 118 miles from Toronto and 120 miles from Detroit, Michigan. The population recorded for 1990 was 294,700. The average income for those working full time, for a full year (in 1985) was \$31,389.00 for males; \$20,153.00 for females; and, \$39,975.00 for families. London's major industries are services (employing 39 per cent of the labour force), trades (employing 18.4 per cent of the labour force) and manufacturing (employing 18.0 per cent of the labour force). The unemployment rate for 1990 was 5.7 per cent (compared to 6.3 per cent provincially and 8.1 per cent nationally).

Any study of woman abuse undertaken in London, Ontario must be considered in the context of the uniqueness of this community in the handling of this issue. Over the past decade, London has become recognized as a forerunner in the provision of services to female victims of violence in intimate relationships. London service agencies have developed a co-ordinated, integrated model of responding to woman abuse. Agencies have worked diligently to meet the needs of women who are abused and to provide specialized treatment programs for male perpetrators and for children who witness violence in their homes. Services have cooperated to develop better service delivery,

avoid duplication of services, initiate research and educational projects, lobby for funding and policy changes and ensure that victims, perpetrators and child witnesses are responded to in an informed, appropriate and consistent manner no matter which agency is approached for assistance.

The principal vehicle for these inroads has been the London Coordinating Committee on Family Violence. This Coordinating Committee was originally formed in 1980 to oversee and guide a study at the London Family Court Clinic, funded by the Solicitor General of Canada (Jaffe & Burris, 1981). This research project was initiated in order to determine the effectiveness of the Criminal Justice System's response to family violence, notably wife assault, in London. With the initiation of this project it became apparent that there was an immediate need for interchange among community agencies and professionals in the field. The Coordinating Committee was thus created to assist in implementing and analyzing the research. Initially, representatives from the London Police Force, Adult Probation and Parole, the Criminal Court, the Family Court, the crown attorney's office, the London Family Court Clinic, Women's Community House (the local shelter for battered women) and a local defense lawyer gathered to form the Coordinating Committee. Coordinating Committee members identified the issue of wife battering as the paramount concern in London and decided to limit their mandate to assessing and integrating its response to battered women and their families. The Coordinating Committee has undergone a recent name change to *The London Coordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse* in order to more accurately reflect the purpose and work of the Coordinating Committee.

The Coordinating Committee began to identify problems that battered women encountered, through a number of preliminary research studies. Initial research findings revealed gaps in services, lack of coordination of services and lack of awareness and involvement of mental health and social service agencies. In 1981 a research report on the Coordinating Committee's work was produced. This report provided an analysis of the existing Criminal Justice System process in London and victims' perceptions of the effectiveness of the system. Several recommendations for change were presented by the Coordinating Committee in response to the findings of this report.

1. The police lay charges in all cases of wife assault.
2. All criminal justice personnel should receive training related to the issues surrounding wife assault.
3. An advocacy service for women should be developed.
4. A clearer distinction needs to be made between civil and criminal processes with respect to wife assault cases.

5. A treatment program for men should be developed.
6. The community should be made aware of the extent of the problem of wife abuse.
7. The Coordinating Committee should promote an integrated community response to victims of wife assault.

As the Coordinating Committee's work progressed, it attracted new members and encouraged the development of new services, these included Changing Ways, a group counselling program for batterers, and the Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic, a non-residential community program that offers supportive counselling and legal information/referrals for abused women. Eventually, traditional service agencies, such as Madame Vanier's Children's Services and Family and Children's Services of London and Middlesex, began offering specialized programs for children exposed to wife assault. Family Service London developed a joint counselling program for couples where violence was identified as an issue. In 1987, the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General assumed responsibility for the Salvation Army Victim Witness Assistance Program. This program, now known as the Court Victim Witness Program supports victims and witnesses throughout the court process. These programs complemented long-standing services in London, such as the London Police Force Family Consultant Service and Women's Community House, a shelter for battered women which opened its doors in London in 1978. Today London offers Second Stage Housing, a longer-term housing and supportive living program for battered women, and Atenlos, a counselling program for Native Canadians facing violence in their personal lives.

In more recent years, the Coordinating Committee has become actively involved in violence prevention programs in conjunction with the Board of Education for the City of London. In 1990, more than ninety professionals from the community, including representatives from many of the twenty-five agencies which fall under the umbrella of the Coordinating Committee participated in workshops aimed at educating administrators, teachers and students in the Board of Education (City of London) on the issue of violence in intimate relationships. The Coordinating Committee's work has become so diverse that it now has several key sub-committees tackling current issues. These committees include a Sentencing Review sub-committee which recently steered a research project comparing dispositions for wife assault cases versus stranger assaults (The London Family Court Clinic, 1990). Other committees are addressing public education, information and training for agencies dealing with child witnesses of woman abuse, and the development of a case management system and common database collection system for London agencies dealing with victims and perpetrators of woman abuse. Representatives from the London Police Force have been active participants both in the larger Coordinating Committee and on sub-committees.



The London Police Force has played an ongoing and crucial role in the development of specialized services and in police inservice training in order to improve the police and community response to battered women. Developments which have taken place at the London Police Force may be unique to this Force and, therefore, warrant further documentation and explanation.

## 1.2 The London Police Force

Through the support and leadership of the London Police Force (notably now retired Inspector John Robinson and former Chief Walter Johnson) a historical change occurred in the response of London's Criminal Justice System to wife battering. In May 1981, London became the first police force in Canada to institute a policy that instructed officers to lay charges of assault in wife abuse cases, regardless of the wishes of the parties involved, whenever there existed reasonable and probable grounds to believe an assault had taken place (See Appendix A for original directive to all London police officers). The implementation of this mandate placed the onus on the police rather than the victim to pursue justice in cases of wife assault. City police also began to give out victim information cards to all victims of wife assault at the time of police intervention. These cards contain occurrence information including the officers' names and number and the plan of action, as well as a listing of community support services available.

Although the 1981 police mandate is laudable, a caution needs to be made that every mandate is only as good as those who enforce it. This is a concern since the mandate does allow for each officer's subjective interpretation of "reasonable and probable grounds". In order to address this concern, the London Police Force has instructed their report readers to give careful consideration to "domestic violence" occurrences to ensure that the appropriate charges were laid.

A second area of possible discretion occurs at the level of dispatch. The dispatch unit is responsible for answering all 911 (emergency) calls. With every call for police assistance, the dispatcher is responsible for determining the nature of the call; how many officers (if any) to send to investigate the call; and the degree of urgency required by the call. In order to determine whether or not wife assault calls were being discriminated against in any way, at the level of dispatch, an independent, objective observer (from the London Family Court Clinic) spent several hours auditing calls to the dispatch unit. Both current or incoming calls and past transactions (from the previous month) were audited. In addition, recent wife assault calls were followed through to their occurrence reports filed by the investigating officer. The police action taken for these calls was also recorded by the observer. The above observations led to the conclusion that there was no apparent discrepancy in the dispatchers handling of wife assault calls (e.g., mislabelled). Overall these calls were handled with a great deal of professionalism and efficiency, indiscriminate of other calls which came into dispatch. It is interesting to note

that some American researchers have suggested that "domestic disputes" were considered so low in priority that up to 75 per cent of the calls were handled by a dispatcher alone without ever sending an officer to the home (Prairie Research Associates, 1990).

Another unique feature of the London Police Force is its Family Consultant Services (FCS) whose conception precedes that of the 1981 charging policy. The FCS was established in 1973 as a three person (now five) civilian crisis unit of the police force to assist officers in responding to a wide variety of crisis situations including incidents of "domestic violence". This service has been instrumental in bridging the gap between law enforcement and local service professionals. The London Police Family Consultant Service has been described in a number of publications (Jaffe & Thompson, 1979).

In summary, the diversity and sophistication of services for victims and perpetrators of violence in London, as well as the ongoing cooperation of the London Police Force with these agencies, means that London is quite unlike most other cities in terms of its criminal justice response to this issue. We would suggest that abused women in London are far more likely to be treated with greater understanding and sensitivity, provided with consistent information and referred to appropriate services than victims elsewhere in Canada. Although the community is always striving to improve on the quality and coordination of existing services for battered women, it is important to reflect on the context of the present research study. As reviewed later in the discussion section of this report, the progressiveness of the London service system is a serious limitation in generalizing the research findings to other communities.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Study Participants**

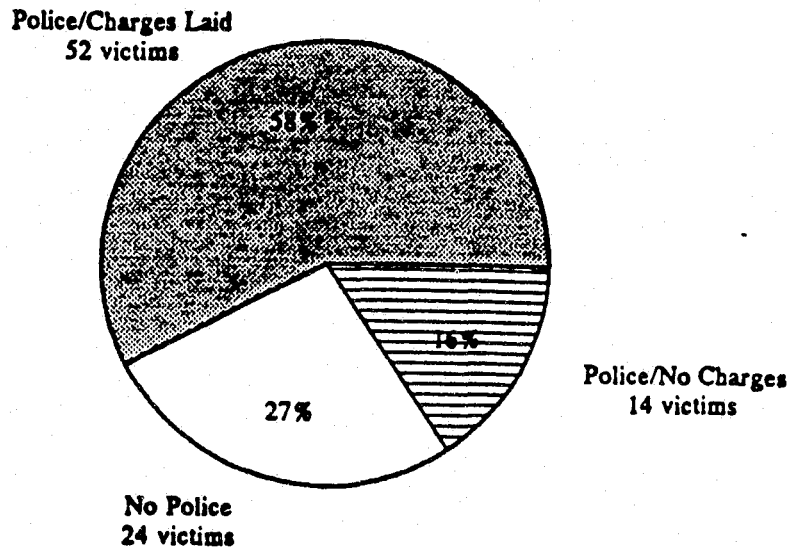
Participants for the study included 90 women<sup>1</sup> who were victims of "wife" assault in 1988 or 1989. Of the 90 participants, 52 were cases in which the police had intervened and charges were laid; 14 had police intervention, but no charges were laid; and, 24 had neither police intervention nor charges laid. The participants were recruited in the following manner: 32 responded to written requests from the London Police Force asking for participants for a study investigating the quality of service offered by the London Police Force and other community agencies (see Appendix B); 33 responded to newspaper advertisements requesting volunteers for an interview related to their experience with the criminal justice system (see Appendix C); 17 participants were referred to the project by community agencies that provide services for battered women; six responded to a flyer which was sent to 50,000 randomly chosen London residences requesting volunteers for an interview related to their experience with the criminal justice system; and two were engaged by other means (one was referred by a family physician who was aware of the study and one referral source is unknown).

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<sup>1</sup>Ninety-seven victims were interviewed. Only 90 are included in the final data analysis. Seven victims were dropped from the study due to incomplete data, a lack of information on the targeted police intervention, or intervention by forces other than the London Police Force.

Figure 1

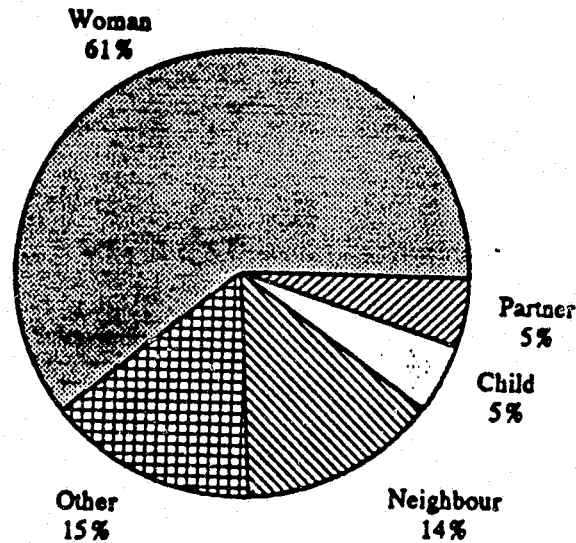
**Study Participants**  
**Total N=90 Abused Women**



Most of the participants (66.7 per cent) were separated from their partners at the time of the interview. At the time of the assault 57.7 per cent of the victims were legally married and 33.0 per cent were residing in a common-law relationship. The participants were predominantly "white" (or caucasian); 5.0 per cent represented visible minorities; and, 8.0 per cent of the partners were reported by the victims as a representative of visible minorities. (This figure is representative of the number of visible minority persons in London which constitutes 4.3 per cent of the municipal population, according to the London Urban Alliance Centre). The average age of the participants was 36; the average age reported for their partners was 38. For the most part, both victims and perpetrators were well-educated with 45.0 per cent of the victims reporting that they had attended college or university and 50.0 per cent reporting that their partners had attended college or university. The mean family annual income for the participants was between \$20,000.00 and \$30,000.00. Thirty-five per cent of the participants had witnessed wife assault in their family of origin and 65.0 per cent of their partners were reported to have witnessed wife assault in their family of origin. Thirty-nine per cent of the victims' partners had prior police involvement related to a domestic violence incident involving the same victim (our study participant). A significant number of victims indicated that a previous assault by their partner had required them to seek medical treatment (38.3 per cent); almost one-half of the participants had been assaulted during a pregnancy (47.9 per cent) of those victims with police contact, 61.0 per cent had called the police themselves (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Who Contacted the London Police



The three sub-groups of participants (i.e., police intervention/charges laid; police intervention/no charges laid; no police intervention/no charges laid) did not demonstrate a significant level of variability on measures of income, marital status, or length of involvement with the abusive partner. Also, the participant profile for the present study is quite similar to the 1983 (post policy) research subjects (Jaffe et al, 1986) as well as the 1979 (prepolicy) research subjects (Jaffe & Burris, 1981).

## 2.2 Measures

Several measurements were employed to gather and record the necessary information for the study. These included the following: the Victim Interview Form (Appendix D), the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979), a Victim Code Sheet (to record information obtained from criminal records files at the London Police Force) (Appendix E) and the London Police Force Patrol Operations Branch Survey on Wife Assault (Appendix F).

The Victim Interview Form formed the basis of a structured interview with participants for the study. This interview protocol was designed to be consistent with the one that was used with research subjects in 1979 and 1983. Changes made to the Interview Form involved primarily the addition of questions in order to probe issues which were not investigated in the previous studies. The Victim Interview Form includes questions pertaining to details of the profile of the victim and her partner such as socioeconomic status, criminal history and violence in the family of origin. Questions related to the violent incident were also probed. These included police and court involvement, details surrounding the assault incident and the victim's satisfaction with community support and services that she may have accessed following the assault.

The Conflict Tactics Scale is a standardized interview questionnaire which provides an assessment of the form and frequency of verbal and physical abuse between family members (Straus, 1979). The Conflicts Tactics Scale (CT) has demonstrated reliability and validity as a measure of parent-to-child and adult-to-adult verbal and physical aggression in a large, representative sample of families (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). The CT scale was completed by each subject with respect to the twelve month period preceding and following the assault which was recorded as having occurred during 1988 or 1989 and was identified as the "target incident" on the Victim Interview Form.

The Victim Code Sheet was designed as an objective measure of details surrounding the assault incident. The Code Sheet is used to record information from the London Police Force criminal records files. This information includes details regarding the date of the assault and any court appearances related to the assault, the type of charge that was laid, who laid the charge, criminal record of the perpetrator, the legal status of the accused prior to sentencing (i.e., in custody, promise to appear, etc.) and the charge outcome including disposition if applicable. This Code Sheet is also used to record a brief synopsis of the assault incident. The primary purpose of the Code Sheet was to provide some information which enabled the subject to focus on one specific assault incident during the victim interview. However, the Code Sheet also provided an objective source of some pertinent information regarding the assault which was later compared to the participant's testimony during the victim interview. Cases indicating extreme discrepancies in pertinent information when comparing the Code Sheet to the Victim Interview Form were excluded from the study.

The London Police Force - Patrol Operations Branch Survey on Partner Assault (Police Survey) was adapted from a similar questionnaire used in the 1985 study. This form was designed to be consistent with the one developed for the 1985 study so that comparisons to this study could be made. The Police Survey provides an assessment of police officers' attitudes with regard to the policy implemented by the London Police Force in May 1981, which requires police to lay charges in cases of wife assault (rather than directing the victim to lay a private information (victim laid charge)). The survey

was completed by 133 officers of the Uniform Division of the London Police Force. The survey included questions related to police perceptions of the effectiveness of this policy with regard to its ability to reduce the incidence of wife assault, its impact on the court system and the community, as well as the potential of the directive to prompt negative side effects (such as causing victims to be reluctant to call the police).

### 2.3 Procedure

As reported earlier, participants were solicited by one of four means:

1. response to a letter issued by the London Police Force;
2. response to an advertisement placed in local newspapers;
3. referral from a community agency; or
4. response to a flyer delivered to 50,000 London residences.

The first of these three methods requires further explanation. A list was generated for all police occurrence reports of assault (Section 245cc)<sup>2</sup>, assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (Section 245.1cc)<sup>2</sup> and aggravated assault (Section 245.2cc)<sup>2</sup> for a period extending from January 01, 1988 to December 31, 1989. In order to select the wife assault cases from this list, the following criteria were used:

1. the assault involved a male perpetrator and a female victim,
2. the perpetrator and the victim resided at the same address,
3. the victim was over the age of 18 (this criterion was added in order to eliminate cases of child abuse).

Due to the occurrence of numerous assaults incurred by the same perpetrator (with the same victim), as well as missing information related to the victim's address, a mailing list for 427 of the 622 wife assault occurrences for 1988 and 1989 was compiled. A letter requesting a confidential interview was sent to these potential subjects (Appendix B) in cooperation with the London Chief of Police. Approximately 40 per cent of these letters were undeliverable as the victim had moved and a current address could not be traced.

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<sup>2</sup>Criminal code numbers were revised subsequent to data collection. The equivalent 1991 Criminal code numbers are 265; 267 or 269; 268 respectively.

Respondents were screened over the telephone in order to ensure that they met the criteria for inclusion in the study. Criteria for inclusion in the study included the following:

1. individual was a victim of wife assault (married or common-law) in 1988 or 1989,
2. individual was over the age of 18,
3. individual was a resident of London at the time of the assault, and
4. police intervention (if any) involved the London Police Force.

Respondents to the newspaper advertisements, those referred by local agencies and respondents to the flyer were also screened over the telephone and subsequently excluded if they did not meet the criteria outlined above.

Each eligible participant was given an interview time at their convenience. Interviews were completed in the offices of the London Family Court Clinic (with the exception of two participants who, at their request, were interviewed at Women's Community House). The interview required between one and two hours to complete, dependent upon the level of involvement of the participant with the criminal justice system and community agencies. The interview included the following components:

1. The purpose of the study and nature of the interview were explained to the participant. It was stressed that involvement in the study was voluntary and that the participant could decline to answer any questions or discontinue the interview at any time.
2. The participant signed a research information/consent form (Appendix G).
3.
  - a) If a code sheet for the target incident was available, the synopsis of the assault incident was reviewed with the participant to help her recall the details related to the assault.
  - b) If the police were not involved, the participant was asked to pick the first assault incident which had occurred in 1988 or 1989; this incident became the "target incident".
4. The Victim Interview Form was completed by the interviewer based on the responses of the participant in a semi-structured interview format.
5. The participant completed the Conflict Tactics scale.



6. If applicable, a hand-out with phone numbers for community agencies which offer support services for victims of wife assault was given to the participant.
7. Appreciation for the participant's involvement in the study was expressed and the participant was given \$20.00.

The above interview format was adhered to for all 90 subjects. It should be noted that three of these interviews involved a professional interpreter (courtesy of the London Cultural Interpretation Service) since these participants did not speak English.

## **3.0 RESULTS**

### **3.1 Response of the London Police Force**

#### **3.1.1 Response of the Police to the Charging Policy**

As indicated previously it is important to look at the London Police Force response to the charging policy that was established in May 1981 in the context of the police response in other Ontario communities. Table 1 indicates the percentage of wife assault charges per wife assault occurrences in London compared to the provincial average for 1987 and 1988. In both years, London police officers laid a higher percentage of charges in wife assault occurrences compared to the provincial average (65.1 versus 46.6 per cent and 70.8 per cent versus 50.8 per cent for 1987 and 1988 respectively). As well, fewer London police officers are prepared to accept the wishes of the victim not to lay charges (18.4 per cent versus 32.2 per cent and 18.4 per cent versus 29.9 per cent respectively).

Table 2 provides a comparison of the laying of wife assault charges by the London Police Force over a decade from 1979 through to 1990. In 1979 (prepolicy) police officers only laid charges in 2.7 per cent of the occurrences involving wife assault. By 1983 this figure was 67.3 per cent, and as of 1990, the figure has risen dramatically to 89.3 per cent. In contrast, other jurisdictions show lower charging rates during this period. For example, RCMP data indicates a charging rate of 51 per cent between 1985 and 1988 (Williamson & Meredith, 1990) and a Toronto Police Force study found a 31 per cent charging rate for 1985-86 (Leighton, 1989).

Table 3 shows the trend for wife assault charges over the last four years between 1987 and 1990. As indicated in Table 3 the figure has risen dramatically from 65.1 per cent to 89.3 per cent. Officers' reasons for not laying charges related to victims' wishes not to lay charges have been reduced from 18.4 per cent to 3.6 per cent reflecting the fact that officers are instructed to lay charges when there is reasonable and probable grounds and not to leave the onus on the victim.

#### **3.1.2 Police Attitudes Regarding Mandate**

Tables 4 and 5 indicate the changing responses of police in regard to the mandate of laying charges in all cases of wife assault where there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe an assault took place. These tables show the changes from 1985 when the survey was initially done, through to 1990, the current data analysis. Overall,

one can see a trend that clearly indicates that police officers are more supportive of the policy.

More than one-half (52.3 per cent) of the officers feel that the policy is effective, compared to only one-third in the previous study. More officers believe the policy helps battered women and may be effective in stopping family violence. Most importantly, the majority of officers agree (in two out of three officers surveyed) that this policy promotes an important message to the community.

Police officers also indicate the courts are more supportive in regard to this policy. The most dramatic result is in the area of the police officers' perceptions that victims are more likely to follow through when police lay charges compared to victims laying their own charges. 77.5 per cent of the officers believe victims are more likely to follow through in 1990 compared to 42.0 per cent that supported this view in the 1985 survey. Table 6 reviews this data on police attitudes, analyzed according to years of service and the differentiation between supervisory police officers and first class constables. Table 6 clearly indicates that officers with more years of experience hold the most progressive views about this policy. The same trend is apparent in the comparison of supervisory police officers compared to first class constables summarized in Table 7.

Table 8 outlines police officers' perceptions of the most important factors that influence their decision to lay an assault charge. Overall, officers choose corroborating evidence as the number one factor, with willingness of victim to testify and seriousness of the victim's injuries as being secondary factors. It is interesting to note that the more junior officers rely on the willingness of victims to testify as a more significant first priority in their decision to lay a charge than do the more senior officers on the force.

### **3.2 Response of Victims of Violence**

Overall, the victims that participated in the study indicated a high level of satisfaction with police response. 74.1 per cent of the victims indicated that the police responded quickly and 65.2 per cent indicated that they were satisfied with the advice that they received. This figure is in stark contrast to the finding from the 1979 survey that found only 48.0 per cent of the victims satisfied with the police response. Most importantly 87.0 per cent of the victims said that they would call the police again.

Of those victims who expressed dissatisfaction, 19 per cent suggested that officers should be more understanding (compared to 31 per cent in 1979). Seven victims felt that charges should be laid (11 per cent compared to 29 per cent in 1979). Six per cent of the victims (compared to three per cent in 1979) felt that more should be done to protect victims such as removing the male from the premises. The most common

suggestion made for improvements was a general request for more information on court process and community service (28 per cent of victims).

The extent and severity of violence used by males against their female partners twelve months before the target incident (or assault) and twelve months after the target incident are summarized in Tables 9 through 18. Within these tables, the results from our interviews in 1990 related to incidents of violence in 1988 and 1989 are compared to the previous study in regard to interviews related to women victimized in 1983. The level of violence indicated before the police intervention is consistently at the same level in both studies according to victim reports on the Conflict Tactics Scale. In the majority of cases, there is a statistically significant reduction in the level of violence after the police intervention.

Tables 19 to 21 break down the changing pattern of violence according to whether or not there was a police intervention and furthermore whether this police intervention resulted in a charge being laid. As indicated in these tables there were significant differences with regard to the severity of violence which had been used (i.e., kicked, bit, hit with a fist, slapped, insulted and swore at) and whether or not there was a police intervention and a charge was laid.

Tables 22 to 25 compared charging to no charging by combining police intervention/no charges and no police intervention into one no charges group. This collapse of the no charges group augmented the sample size from 14 to 51. As indicated in these tables, charging was associated with a significant reduction in violent behaviours that include threatening to hit/throw something, pushed/grabbed/shoved, slapped and kick/bit/hit with a fist.

### 3.2.1 Victims' Perspectives on Community Support

Victims in the study reported utilizing a wide range of supports, ranging from friends to generic social service agencies to specialized services for victims/perpetrators of violence (including the Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic, Women's Community House, Family Service London, Police Family Consultant Service, Atenlos and the Court Victim Witness Program, see Table 26). Friends, relatives and family physicians topped the list for supports most commonly utilized. It is important to note that these groups have traditionally been lacking in specialized training regarding woman abuse and related community services. These numbers, therefore, highlight the importance of on-going efforts to educate the general public, as well as health and mental health professionals on the issues surrounding wife assault and services available. Nearly one-quarter of respondents also utilized clergy for assistance, indicating another group which could possibly benefit from additional training and support in this area.

Use of supports increased, following the target assault, in every case except for hospital services which remained the same. Over time, it appears that victims either became more aware of services or were more willing to utilize them. The most dramatic increases in use occurred with the Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic, Women's Community House and Family Service London, where frequencies virtually doubled. Of particular note is the fact that prior to the target assault, none of the specialized services for victims/perpetrators were among the top five most frequently used supports. In fact, Family Service London and Women's Community House were the least used services prior to the target assault. Since these are among the primary direct-service agencies for victims/perpetrators of woman abuse, it is encouraging to see the trend towards higher utilization of these specialized services following assault. Some victims reported that police referred them to these agencies during intervention (20.4 per cent). Others reported that friends (22.4 per cent), advertising (16.3 per cent) or another agency (13.3 per cent) made them aware of services (see Table 26).

The survey also indicated that victims have continued to contact the police for assistance on successive occasions. The frequency of calls to police increased from 19.6 per cent to 22.4 per cent following the target incident (Table 27). Since charges were laid in the majority of cases involving police intervention in this study, this would suggest that victims do not hesitate to contact police repeatedly despite their knowledge that charges will in all probability be laid. This information is important feedback for officers who have been concerned that the charging policy may discourage women from calling for assistance. Clearly this is not the case; victims are even more likely to call for police intervention on subsequent occasions.

Overall, victims reported positively on community supports utilized. More than 70 per cent rated most services as being somewhat helpful or very helpful. Specialized services such as Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic (61.9 per cent rated it very helpful), Women's Community House (63.0 per cent - very helpful) and Family Service London (68.4 per cent - very helpful) were seen to be most helpful (see Table 27).

Although the London Police are seen as helpful (somewhat and very helpful combined) by six out of ten victims (59.2 per cent), their overall rating is somewhat lower than social services and other helping agencies. This rating is based on victims' global rating of police irrespective of their level of contact and any specific intervention provided. This figure is augmented when victims are asked to specifically rate individual police officer's interventions around the targeted assault incident (65.2 per cent were satisfied with police advice and 87.0 per cent would call the police again).

Several data analyses were completed to examine the interaction between police intervention and level of community support. It had been hypothesized that the police charging policy would be most effective in reducing new incidents of violence when the charges were combined with specialized interventions by community agencies. However,

no significant pattern of results were noted. The small sample size related to police intervention/no charges made it difficult to have a meaningful (adequate sub-sample sizes) comparison for the no charges group with various levels of community support.

### 3.2.2 Victims' Experience and Satisfaction with Court Process

The outcome of assault charges processed by the court by comparison to the previous studies completed in London are summarized in Table 28. Only one in nine charges was dismissed or withdrawn (10.9 per cent) compared to 16.4 per cent and 38.4 per cent in 1983 and 1979 respectively. The charges that result in a fine (43.6 per cent), probation (46.2 per cent), or a jail sentence (17.9 per cent) have increased dramatically from previous years.

Victims expressed a higher level of satisfaction with the court process in comparison to previous studies. For example, 65 per cent of the victims who had contact with crown attorneys felt a sense of complete support. In 1979 when a similar question was asked of victims, only 31 per cent were satisfied with the assistance of the crown attorneys. Over one-half of the victims (53.1 per cent) felt that they spent enough time with crown attorneys in contrast to 1983 when only 41 per cent of the victims said that they had even spoken to a crown attorney before the first court appearance.

Victims raised some serious questions about the length of the court process. Although London does not face the same problems of backlogged cases as in other jurisdictions, 54.3 per cent of the victims were concerned about the length of time required to reach a final disposition for the charges. One-half of the victims were worried about their safety during this period and one-quarter were actually threatened by their partner. A further 8.9 per cent of victims were abused by their partner during the court process.

## 4.0 DISCUSSION

The present research study attempted to evaluate the impact of a police policy that directs police officers to lay charges in cases of wife assault whenever they have reasonable and probable grounds to believe that an assault took place. The study attempted to replicate a study conducted five years previously in the same community. Aside from the replication, an attempt was made to also include victims who had no police contact as an additional comparison group. Abused women were also surveyed on the nature and helpfulness of community supports in regard to their victimization.

In discussing the results of the study it is important to note several limitations at the outset:

1. The site of the study in London, Ontario may be biased towards a more positive response to the issue of wife assault, in light of the nature of its progressive police force and a long standing commitment by the London Police Force and the community to an integrated community response to wife assault (outlined in the Introduction). This commitment is apparent from the data described previously which looks at a much higher charging rate in London compared to the provincial average, as well as a dramatic trend over the last decade from charging approximately one in thirty occurrences of wife assault compared to nine out of 10 occurrences in the past year.
2. This study is also limited by the small number of visible minorities who participated. Five per cent of the participants were representative of a visible minority group, and eight per cent of their abusive partners were reported to be members of a visible minority. Although these figures are consistent with the proportion of visible minorities in London (4.3 per cent of the population), the number of visible minority participants in the study is far too small a group to allow for any conclusions to be drawn regarding the needs of this population.
3. This study is limited by the small sample size especially with regard to those victims who had police involvement and no charges were laid. This difficulty became all the more apparent when one realizes that the London Police Force was laying charges in almost 90 per cent of the incidents involving wife assault. Since the policy is working at a high level, we were unable to find enough cases where police intervened in cases of "wife assault", but no charges were laid. However, our final sample of victims interviewed is proportionately equivalent to the overall sample available for 1988 and 1989 where charges were laid and charges were not laid (15.7 per cent in the present sample versus 23.0 per cent of cases where no charges were laid during the 1988-89 period).

In spite of the limitations in the present study there are some consistent findings that are worthy of discussion. These findings are all the more important in the context of very limited Canadian data on the impact of police laying charges in cases of wife assault. The generally accepted notion that wife assault is a crime, which has been adopted across Canada, has not been followed with a great deal of research to examine the impact of this concept and obvious policy implications.

Overall, it appears that police officers respond in a very positive way to this policy directive, not only by their behaviour, but also in their subsequent attitudes. It is clear from the data that an explicit police policy in regard to wife assault increases dramatically the number of cases that result in charges being laid. Again, this trend is apparent in examining data over a ten year period as well as data over the last four years where the percentage of cases involving women as victims of violence result in police laying charges. This shift is obviously paralleled by the police officers being less inclined to accept victims' wishes not to lay charges. That is, officers apparently make it clear to victims that an assault does not involve a civil proceeding but rather a criminal proceeding and charges which are clearly laid by the police force.

Police charging behaviour seems to be well supported by police attitudes which increasingly see this policy as an effective policy that promotes an important message to the community. This finding is important in that the impact of the policy goes beyond individual cases in promoting a clear statement to the community that violence against women will not be tolerated irrespective of whether it occurs on the streets or in homes. It is also interesting to note the positive shift in regard to the police officers feeling that they receive support from the court, as well as acknowledging that victims do follow through when charges are laid by police officers rather than when charges are left to be laid by the victim. It is important to note that this attitude shift has occurred over a five year period. This shift stresses the fact that changes do not occur overnight in the criminal justice system. One could easily speculate, in retrospect, that the policy initially affects police officers' behaviour in actually laying charges and subsequently their attitudes may become more positive as they see victims following through. In a similar vein, although the officers' initial view of the level of court support and community support may be minimal, over time, the volume of cases and the ongoing education of crown attorneys and judges, as well as support from community agencies may underline the importance of this policy and the ultimate support from victims, the court and the community. The progressive attitude of supervisory police officers as well as those officers with more than ten years experience underlines the fact that these attitudes may shift very gradually and change through direct positive experiences.

The ultimate test of this policy goes beyond the police officers' behaviours and attitudes, but rather focusses on the actual level of violence that women experience in their homes. The present study is a clear indication that the charging policy does lead to significant reduction in violence when one compares police interventions where charges



have been laid, compared to police interventions without charges being laid, as well as no police intervention at all. It is important to note that the victims in the present study report ongoing violence even when charges have been laid. That is, although the policy is statistically significant in its effectiveness, there is rarely a complete termination of violence. This finding suggests that other changes in the community and other interventions are still required. In other words, the policy is effective in the context of the current study, but we are a long way from eliminating the experience of violence for individual victims.

The results of court process for victims indicates some of the benefits of police laying charges as well as the limitations in reducing the level of violence. On the positive side, police charges lead to a significant reduction in charges being withdrawn or dismissed as well as an increase in more serious court sentences (probation, incarceration). However, one-half of the victims report living in fear of continuing violence during the court process and one-quarter of the victims are actually threatened by the perpetrator during this period. Support and protective services for victims seem essential during this period.

The current study also stresses the importance of community interventions for victims. Victims turn to family, friends and front line professionals, like family doctors (to a very large extent), when they are victimized by their partner. It is clear from the data, that interventions offered are not always seen as helpful. This finding stresses the importance of ongoing education about the issue of wife assault for the public at large, as well as front line professional groups. The most effective agencies still seem to be those that specialize in dealing with these problems, as indicated by the trend of results involving Women's Community House, Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic and Family Service London. The present study had hoped to demonstrate some interaction between the police charging policy and level of community supports available for individual victims. No such interaction was found with the current data. Rather than abandon the possibilities of this interaction the authors would conclude that the sample size was too small to effectively examine the interaction of charging policy and various community interventions through helping agencies.

Feedback from victims stresses the importance of ongoing education on the issue of wife assault. When asked for suggestions about how to improve community services for victims of violence, many women (43 per cent) in the present study outlined the need for more public education on the issue. This finding is crucial in light of the level of support offered by friends and relatives. As well, a significant number of victims (28 per cent) indicated a need for police officers to offer more information about the court process and community services. This suggestion highlights the fact that the laying of charges is the beginning of a complex process rather than a "quick fix" intervention. Victims look to the police to prepare them for the next steps in gaining assistance from legal and social services.

We would continue to advocate for a broad-based community understanding of "wife assault" that examines the police intervention in the context of other effective strategies such as the utilization of specialized social services. This sentiment was well summarized by a speaker at the 1989 National Forum on Family Violence:

"...if the needs of victims are to be addressed, attention must be given to what happens after the criminal charge is laid. Police intervention must be tied to services for victims, training and awareness programs in the community and to treatment programs for abusive men." (Glen, 1990, cited in Working Together: 1989 National Forum on Family Violence, (March, 1990) p.18)

## 5.0 SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study addressed the effectiveness of police officers laying charges in cases of wife assault when the police have reasonable and probable grounds to believe that an assault has taken place. The effectiveness of this policy was assessed by interviewing 90 women in London, Ontario who had been physically abused by their partner and received one of three interventions (1. police intervention/charges laid, 2. police intervention/no charges laid, 3. no police intervention/no charges laid). Research findings indicate that victims had a high level of satisfaction with police officers' interventions and reported a significant reduction in violence related to criminal charges being laid. The small sample size did not allow for an analysis of a meaningful interaction between police and other community interventions (e.g., specialized social services).

The effectiveness of the policy was also assessed by examining police data on the number of charges laid and a survey of police officers' attitudes in regard to the importance and impact of the directive to lay charges in cases of wife assault. The policy was shown to be implemented in a dramatic fashion. Between 1979 (prepolicy) and 1990 the rate of charges had increased from 2.7 per cent to 89.9 per cent of wife assault occurrences. Over a four year period between 1987 and 1990 officers were significantly less inclined to leave the responsibility for laying charges with victims. The change in laying charges was paralleled by more positive views on the importance of the policy and the perceived support from victims and the courts.

The court response to the charges indicated a continuing trend for fewer cases being dismissed or withdrawn in comparison to previous years. The police charges led to a significant increase in more serious court sentences (probation, incarceration) than in previous years, especially in contrast to victim-laid charges (Jaffe et al, 1986). Although the charges led to a significant reduction in the violence that victims reported, the fear of violence continued. During the court process one-half of the victims continued to fear for their safety and one-quarter were threatened by the batterer. Many victims indicated a need for greater awareness of their plight in the community through public awareness (42 per cent) and through the police (28 per cent) through more information about court process and community services.

The limitations in generalizing the study's findings were discussed in terms of the progressive nature of the London Police Force and the coordinated community response to violence against women in London. Limitations were also discussed in regard to the small sample size and the small number of participants who represented visible minorities.

The authors would like to suggest the following recommendations for consideration:

1. Feedback should be offered to the London Police Force through Chief Shipley to the London Police Services Board members and officers on the successful implementation of the charging policy. A review of the information offered to victims by police officers in regard to court process and community services should be considered.
2. The research findings should be shared with other police forces across Canada. Appropriate federal and provincial government ministries should collate feedback and examine the consistency in the application of the national focus. Previous research suggests an uneven application of the charging policy across different jurisdictions (e.g., Leighton, 1989).
3. The research findings should be shared with police colleges and provincial justice institutes across Canada to better inform instructors, new recruits and ongoing inservice on the impact of laying charges in cases of wife assault.
4. Future research should be funded by appropriate federal and provincial government ministries to examine the following:
  - (a) The response of police forces in other communities in Canada matched as much as possible in size and makeup to London, Ontario. The response of other police forces should be assessed by comparable interviews with victims, surveys of officers and data collection on wife assault charges and wife assault occurrences.
  - (b) The current study should be replicated with a larger sample size to allow a comparison of various police interventions by themselves as well as an interaction with other community supports such as specialized services for victims and perpetrators of violence (e.g., Dutton, 1988).
  - (c) Since the current study had a low number of victims representing visible minorities, it is difficult to draw conclusions vis à vis this population. Future studies need to develop

effective strategies to engage persons representing visible minorities in a similar study in order to identify the special needs of this population. As a preliminary step in finding out what these strategies or special needs may be, the Clinic has developed a survey for immigrant women on the topic of wife assault. The survey provides some basic information about wife assault and asks questions related to the participant's knowledge of the issue and her perception of what special services might be helpful for Canadian women from her country of origin who are victims of wife assault. (This survey is available upon request from the London Family Court Clinic.)

- (d) Although concerns remain about negative side-effects of the charging policy (e.g., victims discouraged from reporting or husbands becoming more violent as suggested in 1989 National Forum on Family Violence), there is no evidence of these issues in the current study. One could suggest that the victims who volunteered to participate in this study were biased towards favourable attitudes about the police. Future studies could more actively and directly solicit views from the community to explore the existence of negative side effects.
- (e) Since the police are the front line of the criminal justice system, their ultimate effectiveness is dependent on the sensitive and skilled intervention of crown attorneys and judges. Future research should explore victims' satisfaction with the court process and the impact of the court on recidivism of wife assault.

5. The present study reinforces the importance of public education and a high level of awareness on the part of front line professionals (e.g., family doctors, clergy) on the issue of abused women. Victims are most likely to turn to friends and relatives for support and the initial responses they receive may be crucial in reducing the likelihood of further violence. It is interesting to note that current

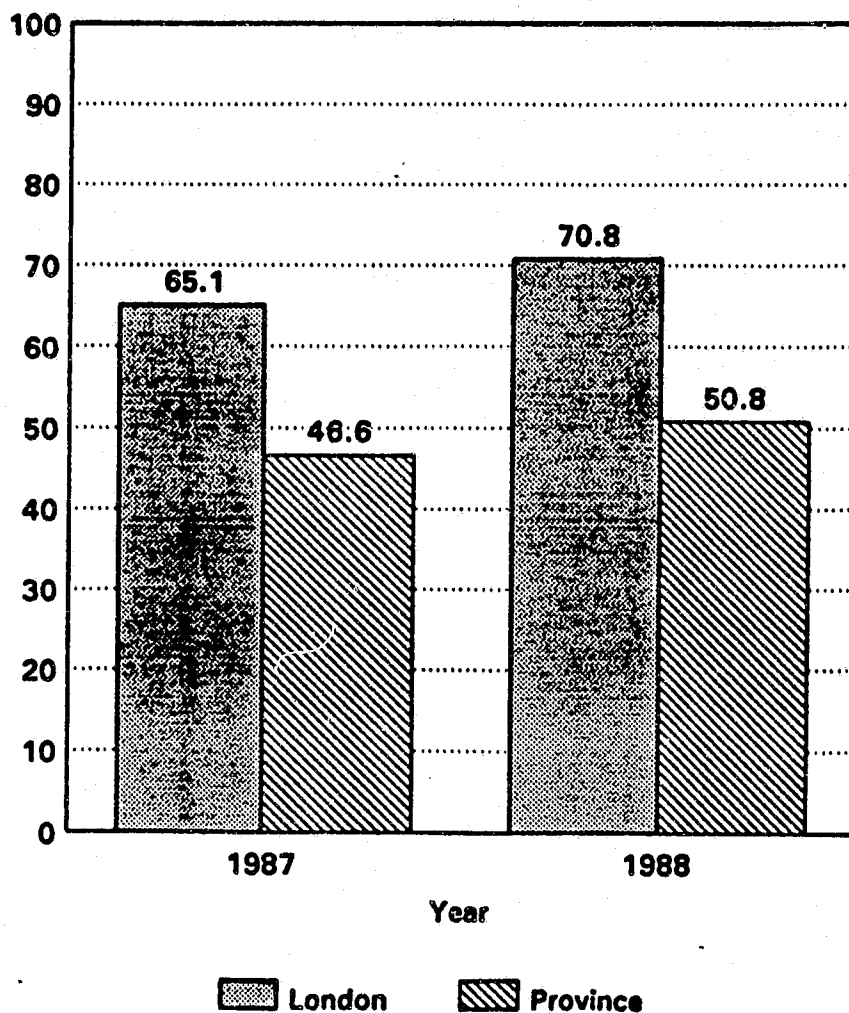
primary prevention programs initiated by the London Co-ordinating Committee to End Woman Abuse in collaboration with the Board of Education for the City of London have in part focused on the importance of peer support and the sensitivity of students' responses to peers living with violence at home or in dating relationships (Jaffe, Reitzel, Sudermann & Killip, 1990).

6. The importance of specialized services that are geared to the needs of battered women are underlined by the degree to which these services are considered "very helpful" by victims of violence.
7. Canadian police forces should clearly communicate their charging policy on behalf of all victims of violence. This communication is especially important in light of previous studies that suggest victims do not believe that the police can do anything in cases of wife assault. Ultimately the same community response to other social issues e.g., drinking and driving, needs to be developed for violence against women.
8. It is important to remember that the police charging policy is not a "quick fix" for the issue of woman abuse. Although victims report a significant reduction in violence associated with the laying of charges, many victims report ongoing fears and actual threats from their partner during the court process. Communities need to examine the level of support and protection available to victims before, during, and after the laying of charges. The community response to victims through the criminal justice system needs to be examined as a coordinated intervention rather than piecemeal policies (Prairie Research Associates, 1990).

**Table 1**

**London Police Force  
Wife Assault Charges Compared to  
Provincial Average for 1987-1988**

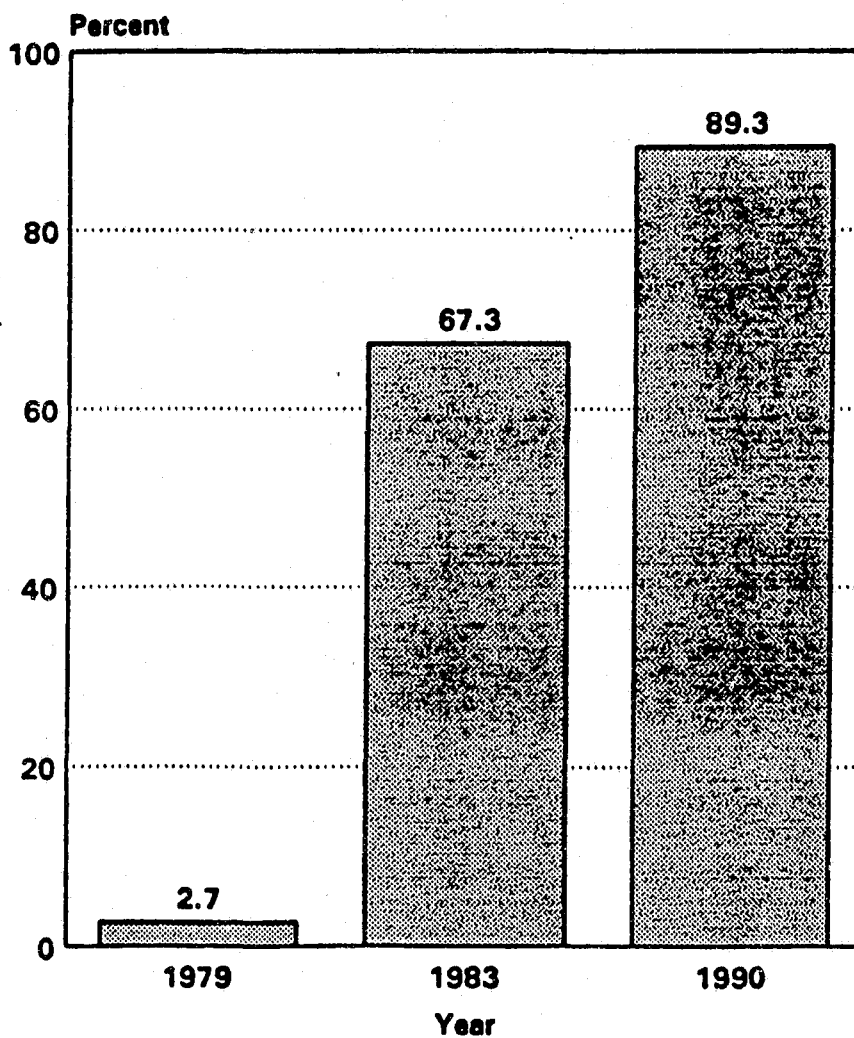
	Year	London	Province
Per cent of Wife Assault Occurrence Where Charge Laid	1987	65.1%	46.6%
	1988	70.8%	50.8%
Reason No Charges Related to Wish of Victim	1987	18.4%	32.2%
	1988	18.4%	29.9%



**Table 2**

**London Police Force  
Wife Assault Charges  
1979-1990**

	Pre-Policy	Post-Policy	
	1979	1983	1990
Wife Assault Occurrence	444	443	358
Charges	12	298	320
Per cent (%)	2.7	67.3	89.3





**Table 3**

**London Police Force  
Wife Assault Charges  
1987 - 1990**

	1987	1988	1989	1990
Wife Assault Occurrence	315	288	335	358
Charges Laid by Police	205	204	269	320
Charges as a Per cent of Occurrence	65.1%	70.8%	79.1%	89.3%
Officer's Reason for No Charge Related to Wishes of Victim	18.4%	18.4%	13.6%	3.6%

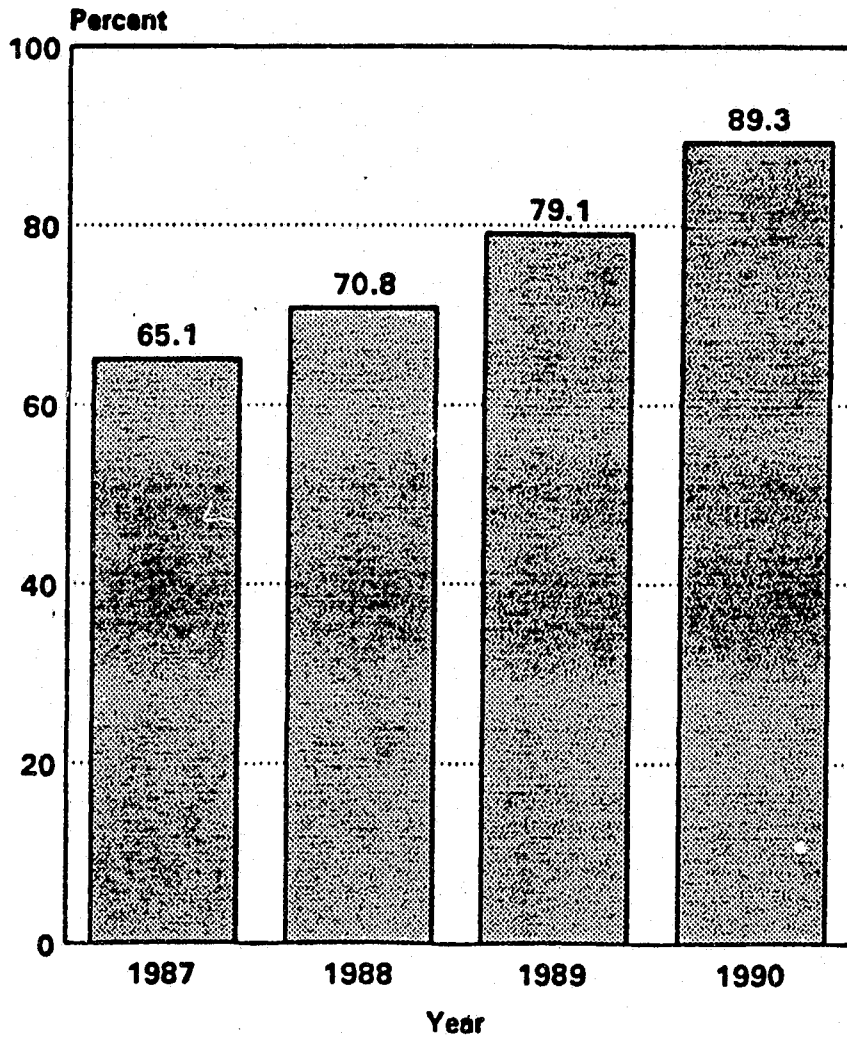
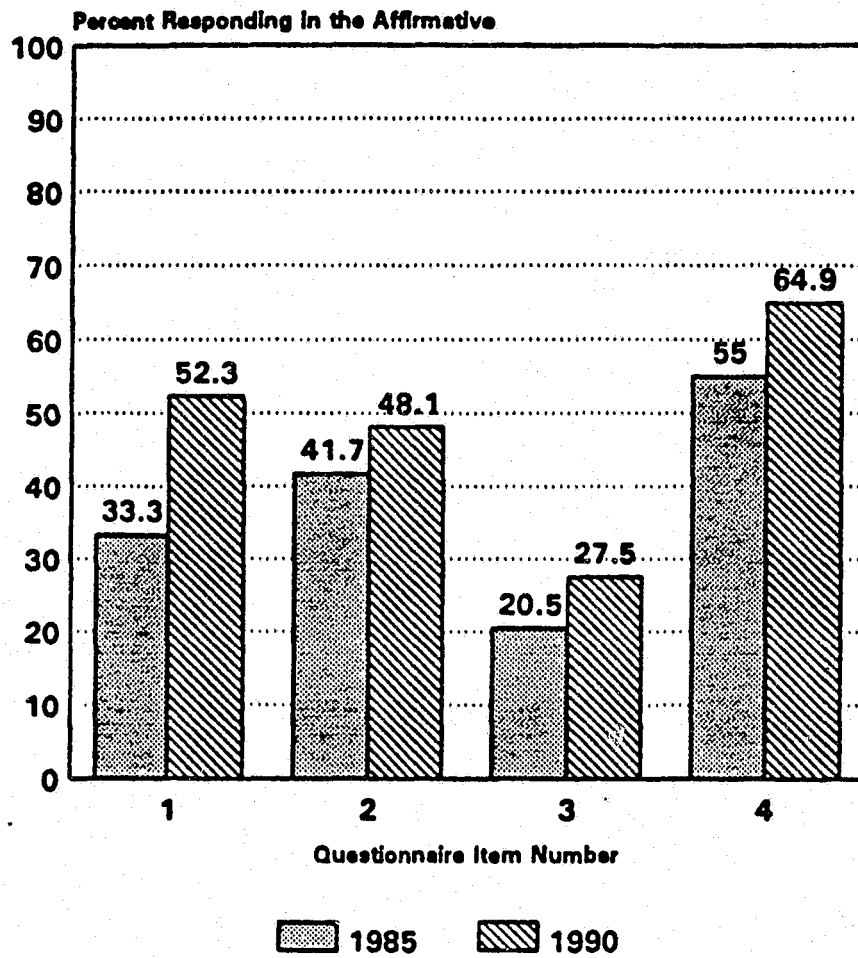


Table 4

Police Attitudes Regarding Mandate



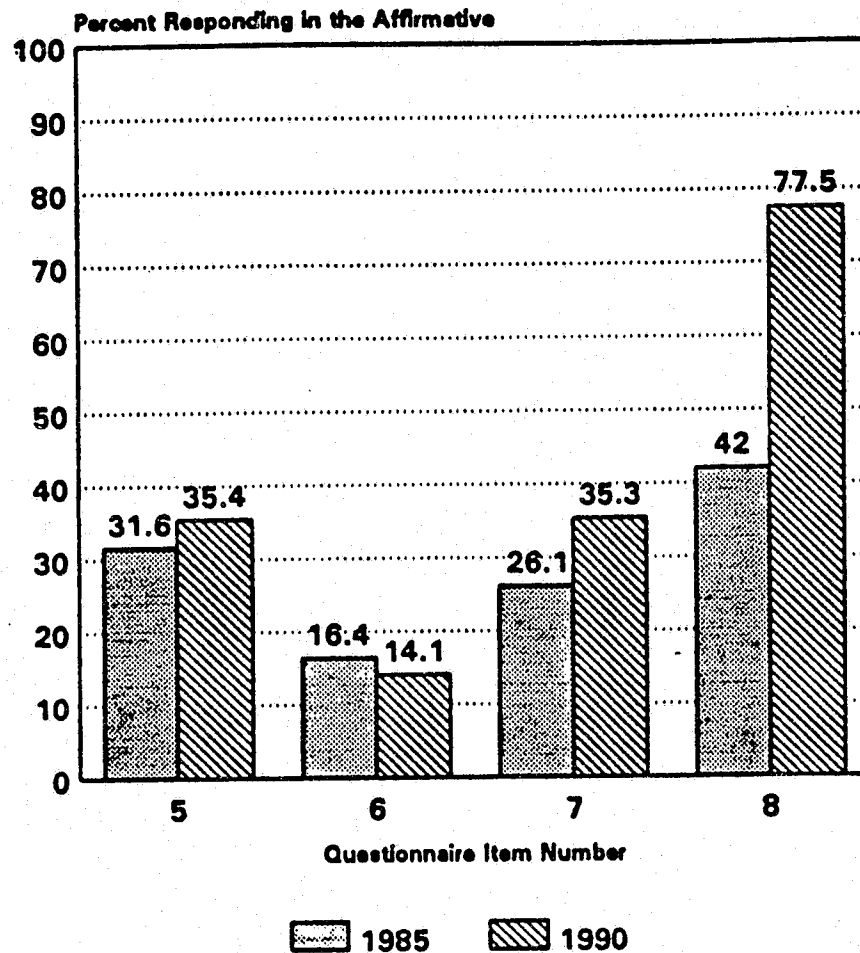
Questionnaire Items

Do you feel that...

1. ...this policy is effective?
2. ...this policy helps battered women?
3. ...this policy stops family violence?
4. ...this policy promotes an important message to the community?

Table 5

Police Attitudes Regarding Mandate



Questionnaire Items

Do you feel that...

5. ...the policy has had any negative side effects, such as women hesitant to call the police?
6. ...the policy has had any negative side effects, such as husbands becoming more dangerous?
7. ...the courts support the police policy?
8. ...the victims are more likely to follow though when police lay charges compared to victim laid charges?

Table 6

Police Attitudes Re: Mandate  
According to their Number of Years in Police Service

Survey Items	Number of Years in Police Service			
	< 4	4 - 10	> 10	Overall
% "NOT AT ALL" - "DEFINITELY"				
<b>1 A. IS THE POLICY EFFECTIVE?</b>				
***1 Not At All	12.8	10.3	4.0	8.6
2	15.4	10.3	6.0	10.2
3 Undecided	43.6	23.1	22.0	28.9
4	28.2	46.2	34.0	35.9
5 Definitely	0	10.3	34.0	16.4
<b>1 B. DOES THE POLICY HELP BATTERED WOMEN?</b>				
***1 Not At All	10.3	7.5	2.0	6.2
2	15.4	7.5	6.0	9.3
3 Undecided	41.0	37.5	32.0	36.4
4	33.3	35.0	28.0	31.8
5 Definitely	0	12.5	32.0	16.3
<b>1 C. DOES THE POLICY STOP FAMILY VIOLENCE?</b>				
**1 Not At All	23.1	12.5	10.0	14.7
2	33.3	22.5	10.0	20.9
3 Undecided	30.8	42.5	36.0	36.4
4	10.3	20.0	34.0	22.5
5 Definitely	2.6	2.5	10.0	5.4
<b>1 D. DOES THE POLICY PROMOTE A MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY?</b>				
1 Not At All	10.3	2.5	6.0	6.2
2	5.1	10.0	6.0	7.0
3 Undecided	35.9	17.5	14.0	21.7
4	38.5	50.0	40.0	42.6
5 Definitely	10.3	20.0	34.0	22.5

\* Statistically significant difference;  $p < .05$

\*\* Statistically significant difference;  $p < .01$

\*\*\* Statistically significant difference;  $p < .001$

N varies from 126 to 129 due to incomplete responses; cells are approximately equal

Table 6 (Cont'd)

Survey Items	Number of Years in Police Service			
	< 4	4 - 10	> 10	Overall
	% "NOT AT ALL" - "DEFINITELY"			
<b>2 A. DOES THE POLICY MAKE WOMEN HESITANT TO CALL THE POLICE</b>				
1 Not At All	5.1	15.4	16.0	12.5
2	17.9	15.4	18.0	17.2
3 Undecided	33.3	38.5	32.0	34.4
4	38.5	17.9	22.0	25.8
5 Definitely	5.1	12.8	12.0	10.2
<b>2 B. DOES THE POLICY CAUSE HUSBANDS TO BECOME MORE DANGEROUS?</b>				
1 Not At All	2.6	24.3	26.0	18.3
2	10.3	37.8	32.0	27.0
3 Undecided	59.0	29.7	34.0	40.5
4	25.6	8.0	6.0	12.7
5 Definitely	2.6	0	2.0	1.6
<b>3 A. IS THE POLICY SUPPORTED BY CROWN ATTORNEYS?</b>				
1 Not At All	0	0	0	0
2	10.8	5.0	8.0	7.9
3 Undecided	18.9	12.5	12.0	14.2
4	59.5	57.5	44.0	52.8
5 Definitely	10.8	25.0	36.0	25.2
<b>3 B. IS THE POLICY SUPPORTED BY FAMILY COURT JUDGES?</b>				
1 Not At All	2.8	7.5	10.0	7.1
2	2.8	7.5	6.0	5.6
3 Undecided	38.9	32.5	22.0	30.2
4	41.7	37.5	38.0	38.9
5 Definitely	13.9	15.0	24.0	18.3

• Statistically significant difference;  $p < .05$

•• Statistically significant difference;  $p < .01$

••• Statistically significant difference;  $p < .001$

N varies from 126 to 129 due to incomplete responses; cells are approximately equal

Table 6 (Cont'd)

Survey Items	Number of Years in Police Service			Overall
	< 4	4 - 10	> 10	
% "NOT AT ALL" - "DEFINITELY"				
<b>3 C. IS THE POLICY SUPPORTED BY CRIMINAL COURT JUDGES?</b>				
1 Not At All	2.7	7.5	14.0	8.7
2	5.4	15.0	12.0	11.0
3 Undecided	29.7	27.5	24.0	26.8
4	48.6	35.0	30.0	37.0
5 Definitely	13.5	15.0	20.0	16.5
<b>4. ARE VICTIMS MORE LIKELY TO FOLLOW THROUGH?</b>				
1 Not At All	30.8	17.5	26.0	24.8
2	28.2	25.0	8.0	19.4
3 Undecided	12.8	20.0	18.0	17.1
4	20.5	27.5	24.0	24.0
5 Definitely	7.7	10.0	24.0	14.7

• Statistically significant difference;  $p < .05$

•• Statistically significant difference;  $p < .01$

••• Statistically significant difference;  $p < .001$

*N* varies from 126 to 129 due to incomplete responses; cells are approximately equal

Table 7

Police Attitudes Re: Mandate  
Supervisors vs. Constables

Survey Items	Supervisor	Constable
<b>1 A. IS THE POLICY EFFECTIVE?</b>		
***		
Not At All	0	9.5
	0	11.2
Uncertain	16.7	30.2
	41.7	35.3
Definitely	41.7	13.8
<b>1 B. DOES THE POLICY HELP BATTERED WOMEN?</b>		
Not At All	0	6.8
	0	10.3
Uncertain	41.7	35.9
	16.7	33.3
Definitely	41.7	13.7
<b>1 C. DOES THE POLICY STOP FAMILY VIOLENCE?</b>		
Not At All	8.3	15.4
	0	23.1
Uncertain	33.3	36.8
	50.0	19.7
Definitely	8.3	5.1

- \* Statistically significant difference;  $p < .05$
- \*\* Statistically significant difference;  $p < .01$
- \*\*\* Statistically significant difference;  $p < .001$
- N for supervisors = 12; N for constables = 117

**NOTE:** Results should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size related to "supervisors"

**Table 8**

**Police Attitudes Re: Mandate  
According to their Number of Years in Police Service**

Question #5: In responding to domestic assault calls which of the following factors influence your decision to lay a charge? Rank the three (3) most important factors.

Survey Items	% Choosing Item as <b>FIRST</b> Priority Number of Years in Police Service			
	< 4	4 - 10	> 10	Overall
Corroborating Evidence	27.3	43.3	36.7	35.5
Willingness of <u>Victim</u> to Testify	39.4	23.3	33.3	32.3
Seriousness of Victim's Injuries	15.2	16.7	10.0	14.0
Likelihood of Conviction	3.0	3.3	10.0	5.4
Willingness of <u>Witness</u> to Testify	0	3.3	3.3	2.2
Use of Alcohol/Drugs by Victim	3.0	0	3.3	2.2
Police Record of Domestic Violence	6.1	0	0	2.2
Other	0	3.3	3.3	2.2
Presence of Children	0	3.3	0	1.1
Composure of Victim	3.0	0	0	1.1
Use of Alcohol/Drugs by Offender	0	3.3	0	1.1
Criminal Record of Offender	3.0	0	0	1.1
Age of Victim	0	0	0	0
Age of Offender	0	0	0	0
Concurrent Civil Proceedings	0	0	0	0

Survey Items	% Choosing Item as <b>SECOND</b> Priority Number of Years in Police Service			
	< 4	4 - 10	> 10	Overall
Corroborating Evidence	27.3	20.7	33.3	27.2
Willingness of <u>Victim</u> to Testify	15.2	10.3	23.3	16.3
Willingness of <u>Witness</u> to Testify	9.1	13.8	6.7	9.8
Seriousness of Victim's Injuries	3.0	20.7	6.7	9.8
Composure of Victim	6.1	17.2	3.3	8.7
Use of Alcohol/Drugs by Victim	12.1	6.9	3.3	7.6
Police Record of Domestic Violence	9.1	3.4	3.3	5.4
Likelihood of Conviction	6.1	0	6.7	4.3
Use of Alcohol/Drugs by Offender	3.0	3.4	3.3	3.3



Table 8 (cont'd)

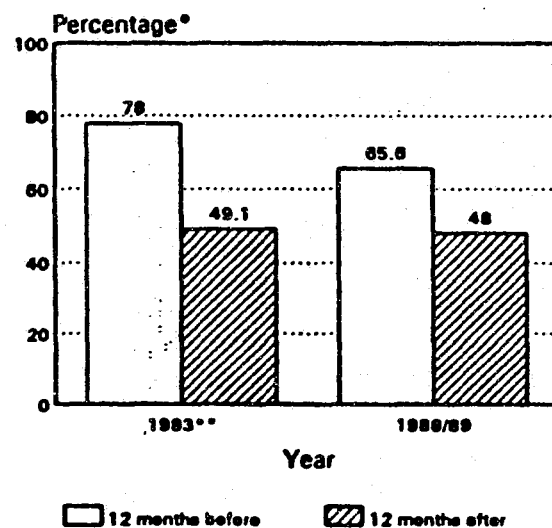
Survey Items	% Choosing Item as <u>SECOND</u> priority Number of Years in Police Services			
	< 4	4 - 10	> 10	Overall
Other	0	3.4	6.7	3.3
Presence of Children	6.1	0	0	2.2
Concurrent Civil Proceedings	3.0	0	3.3	2.2
Age of Victim	0	0	0	0
Age of Offender	0	0	0	0
Criminal Record of Offender	0	0	0	0

Survey Items	% Choosing Item as <u>THIRD</u> priority Number of Years in Police Service			
	< 4	4 - 10	> 10	Overall
Composure of Victim	6.1	14.8	20.7	13.5
Willingness of <u>Victim</u> to Testify	12.1	14.8	10.3	12.4
Presence of Children	9.1	11.1	13.8	11.2
Seriousness of Victim's Injuries	15.2	3.7	13.8	11.2
Use of Alcohol/Drugs Injuries	12.1	11.1	10.3	11.2
Willingness of <u>Witness</u> to Testify	15.2	11.1	3.4	10.1
Corroborating Evidence	3.0	11.1	13.8	9.0
Police Record of Domestic Violence	9.1	7.4	6.9	7.9
Concurrent Civil Proceedings	6.1	3.7	3.4	4.5
Likelihood of Conviction	3.0	7.4	0	3.4
Use of Alcohol/Drugs by Offender	3.0	3.7	0	2.2
Age of Offender	0	0	3.4	1.1
Criminal Record of Offender	3.0	0	0	1.1
Other	3.0	0	0	1.1
Age of Victim	0	0	0	0

N varies from 89 to 93 due to incomplete surveys

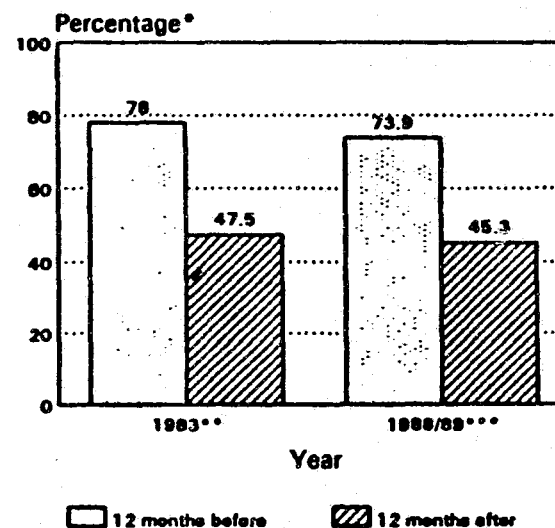
# Extent and Severity of Violence Used by Males Against Female Partners

**TABLE 9**  
**Threatened to hit or throw something**  
(Before and after target incident)



\* Percent of subjects reporting at least one occurrence  
\*\*  $p < .01$

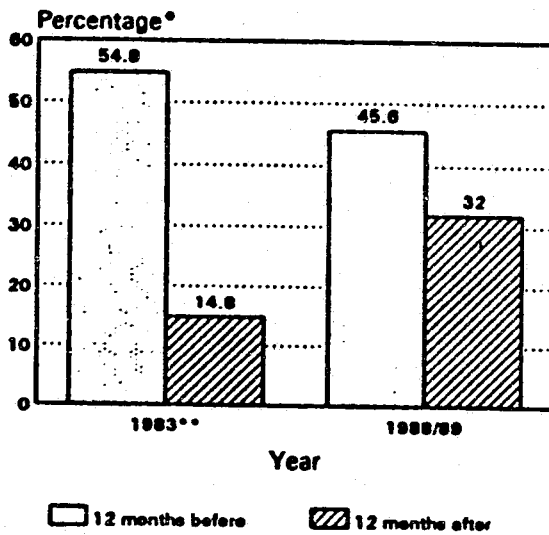
**TABLE 10**  
**Threw, smashed, hit or kicked something**  
(Before and after target incident)



\* Percent of subjects reporting at least one occurrence  
\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .05$

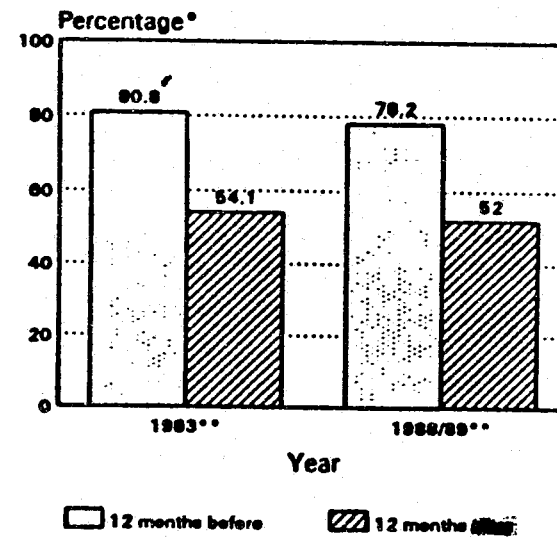
# Extent and Severity of Violence Used by Males Against Female Partners

**TABLE 11**  
**Threw something at the other**  
 (Before and after target incident)



\* Percent of subjects reporting at least one occurrence  
 \*\* p < .01

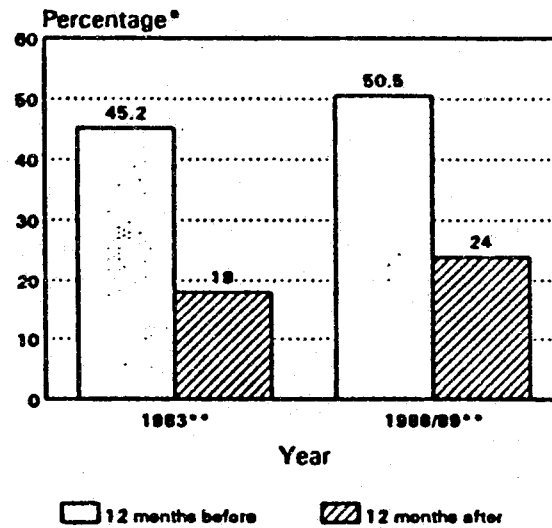
**TABLE 12**  
**Pushed, grabbed, or shoved**  
 (Before and after target incident)



\* Percent of subjects reporting at least one occurrence  
 \*\* p < .01

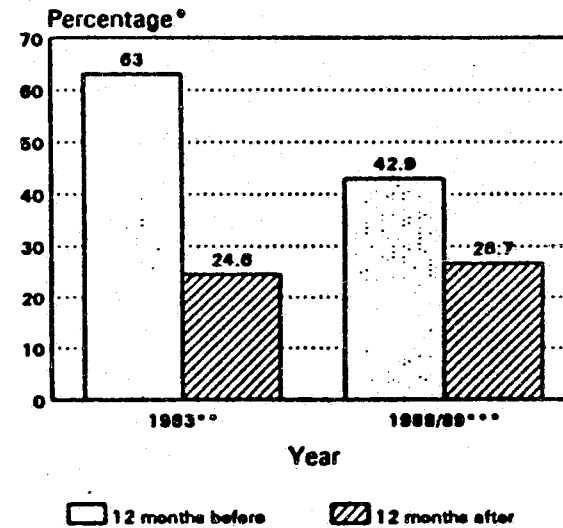
# Extent and Severity of Violence Used by Males Against Female Partners

**TABLE 13**  
**Hit or tried to hit with something**  
 (Before and after target incident)



\* Percent of subjects reporting at least one occurrence  
 \*\*  $p < .01$

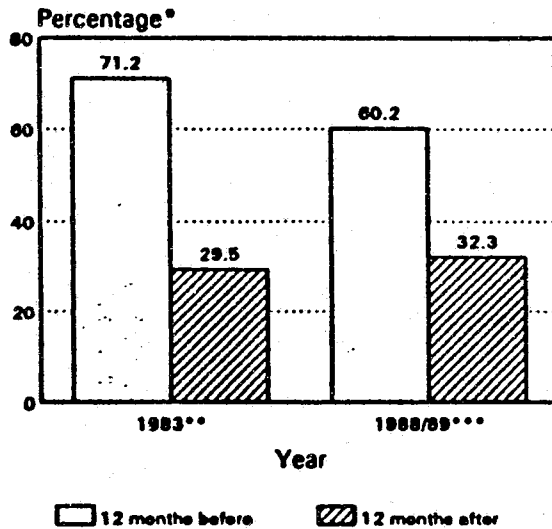
**TABLE 14**  
**Beat up the other one**  
 (Before and after target incident)



\* Percent of subjects reporting at least one occurrence  
 \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .05$

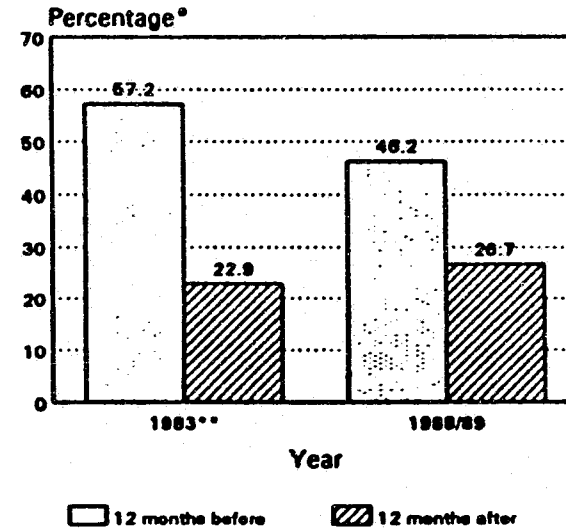
# Extent and Severity of Violence Used by Males Against Female Partners

**TABLE 15**  
**Slapped**  
(Before and after target incident)



\* Percent of subjects reporting at least one occurrence  
\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .05$

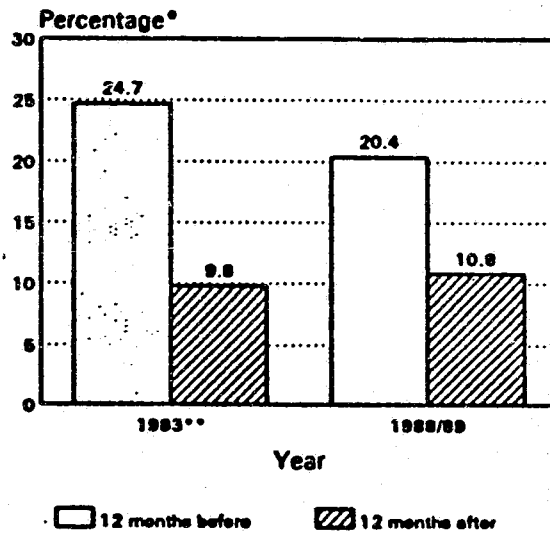
**TABLE 16**  
**Kicked, bit, or hit with fist**  
(Before and after target incident)



\* Percent of subjects reporting at least one occurrence  
\*\*  $p < .01$

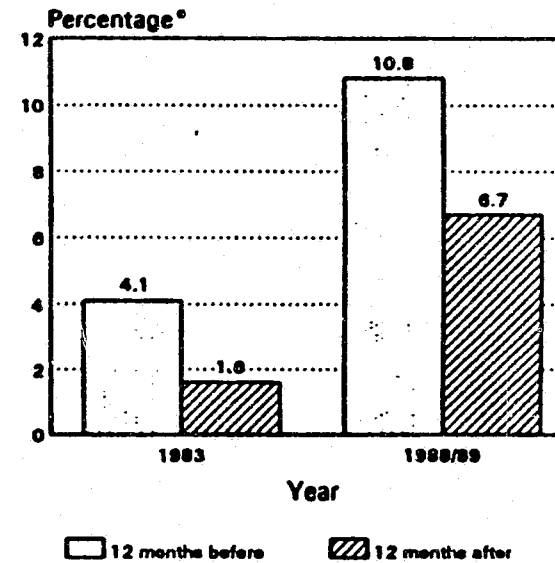
# Extent and Severity of Violence Used by Males Against Female Partners

**TABLE 17**  
**Threatened with a weapon**  
(Before and after target incident)



\* Percent of subjects reporting at least one occurrence  
\*\* p < .05

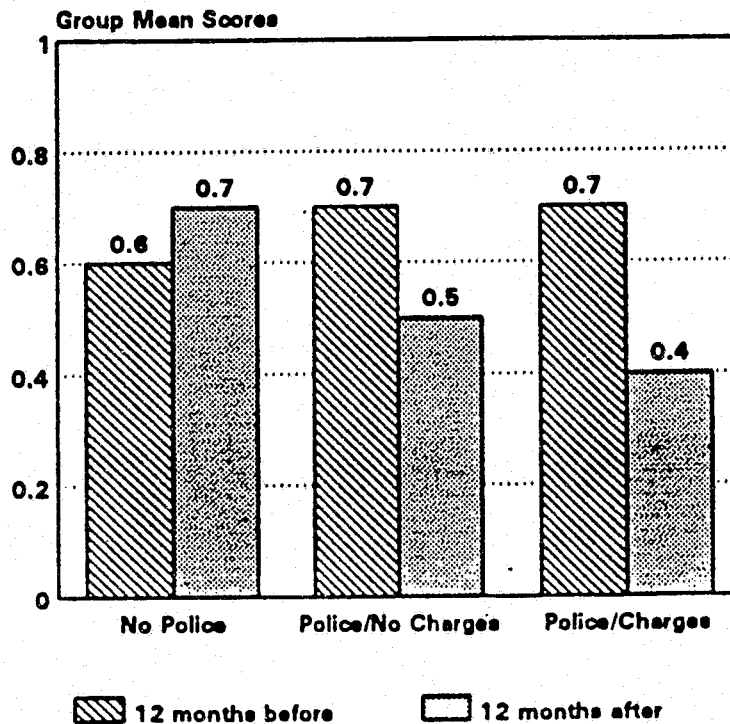
**TABLE 18**  
**Used a weapon**  
(Before and after target incident)



\* Percent of subjects reporting at least one occurrence

# Severity of Violence used by Males Against Female Partners

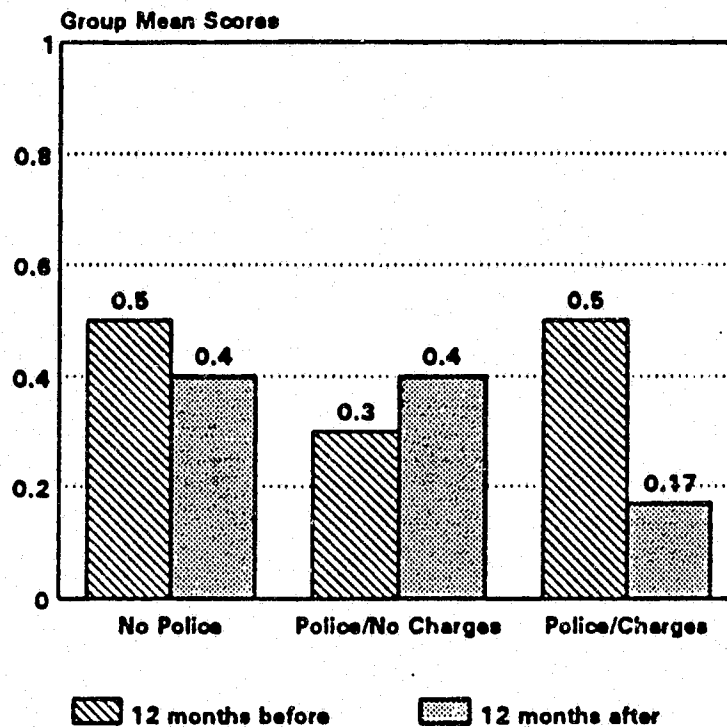
**TABLE 19**  
**Insulted/swore at\***  
(Before and after target incident)



\* $P < .05$   
Mean scores range from 0 (never occurred to 1 (occurred one or more times)

# Severity of Violence used by Males Against Female Partners

**TABLE 20**  
**Kicked/bit/hit with fist\***  
(Before and after target incident)

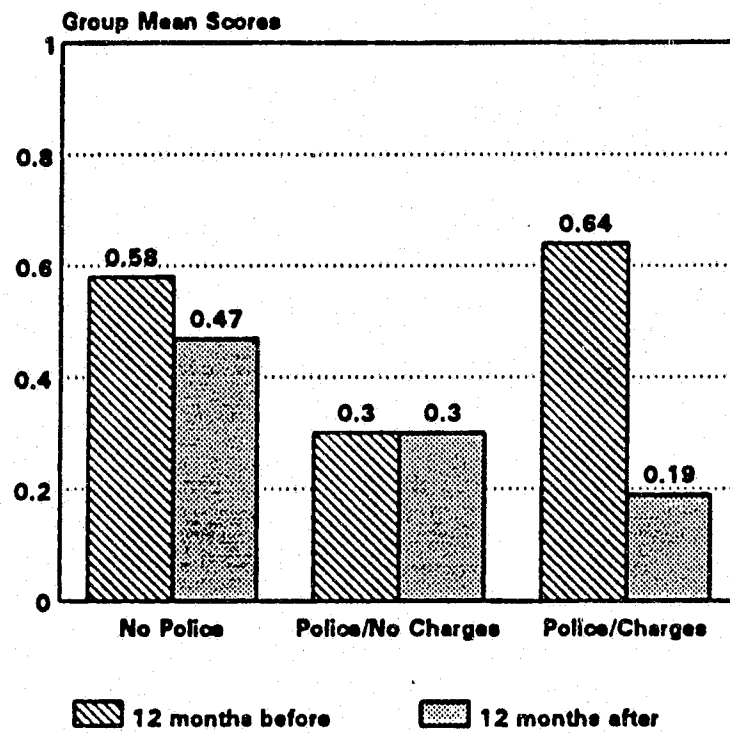


\* $p < .05$   
Mean scores range from 0 (never occurred  
to 1 (occurred one or more times)



# Severity of Violence used by Males Against Female Partners

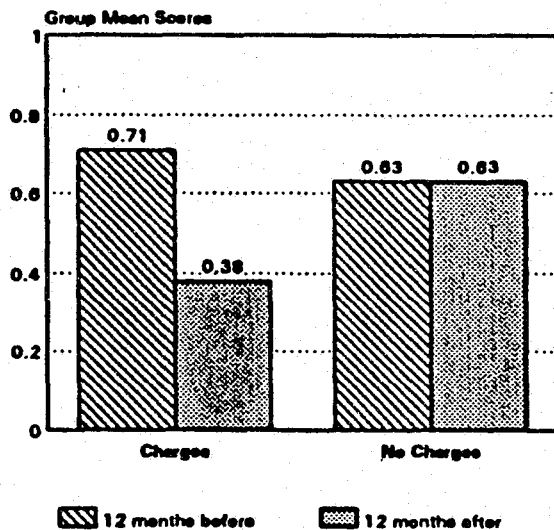
**TABLE 21**  
**Slapped\***  
(Before and after target incident)



\* $p < .05$   
Mean scores range from 0 (never occurred)  
to 1 (occurred one or more times)

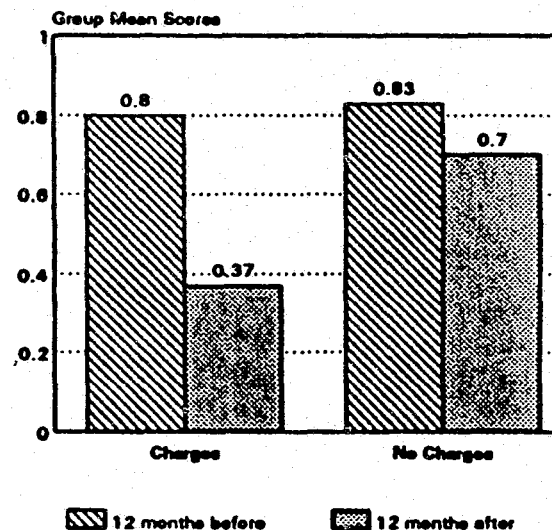
# Severity of Violence used by Males against Female Partners

**TABLE 22**  
**Threatened to hit/throw something\***  
(Before and after target incident)



\*p < .05  
Mean scores range from 0 (never occurred) to 1 (occurred one or more times)

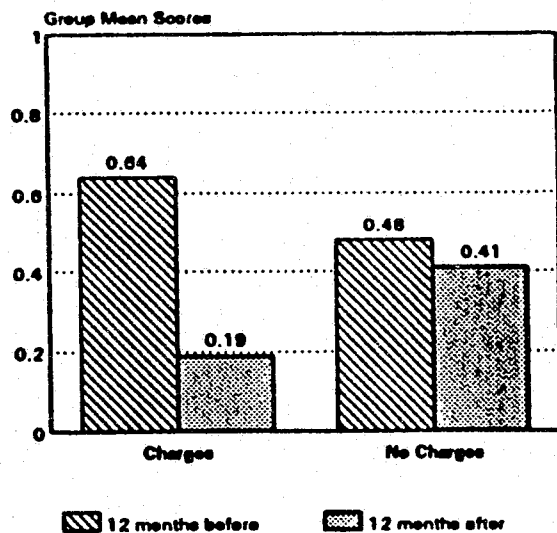
**TABLE 23**  
**Pushed/grabbed/shoved\***  
(Before and after target incident)



\*p < .05  
Mean scores range from 0 (never occurred) to 1 (occurred one or more times)

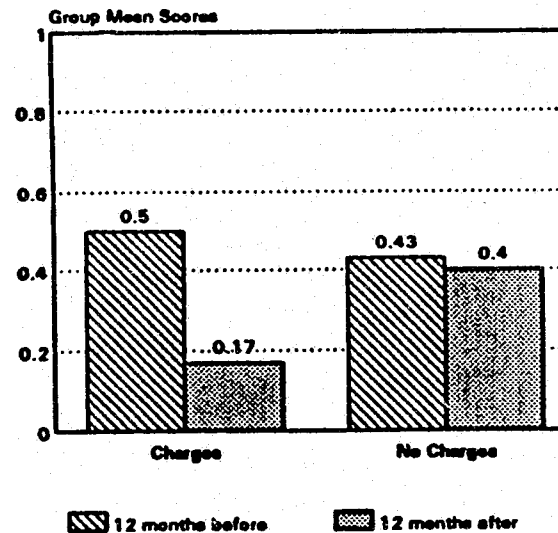
# Severity of Violence used by Males against Female Partners

**TABLE 24**  
**Slapped\***  
(Before and after target incident)



\*p < .05  
Mean scores range from 0 (never occurred to 1 (occurred one or more times)

**TABLE 25**  
**Kicked/bit/hit with fist\***  
(Before and after target incident)



\*p < .05  
Mean scores range from 0 (never occurred to 1 (occurred one or more times)

**Table 26**  
**Community Support**

	n	%
Friends	22	22.4
Police	20	20.4
Advertising	16	16.3
Another Agency	13	13.3
Family Member	8	8.7
Victim Witness Assistance Program	5	5.1
Physician	5	5.1
Crown	3	3.1
Other <sup>a</sup>	29	29.6

---

<sup>a</sup> Other includes telephone book, employee counselling centre, lawyer, probation, etc.

**Table 27**  
**Community Support to Victims**

Nature of Support	Accessed (Occasionally/Frequently)				Satisfaction					
	Before Assault		After Assault		Not at all Helpful		Somewhat Helpful		Very helpful	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Friends	66	68.1	74	76.3	6	7.9	38	50.0	32	42.1
Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic	17	17.5	38	38.7	5	11.9	11	26.2	26	61.9
Relatives	56	56.7	71	73.2	10	13.5	33	44.6	31	41.9
Individual Counselling	30	30.9	42	42.5	7	14.0	7	14.0	36	72.0
Women's Community House	11	11.3	22	22.4	5	18.5	5	18.5	17	63.0
Hospital	16	16.5	16	16.4	4	19.0	8	38.1	9	42.9
Family Service London	7	7.2	15	15.3	4	21.1	2	10.5	13	68.4
Doctor	41	42.2	46	46.9	13	24.5	19	35.8	21	39.6
	14	14.4	18	18.4	6	26.1	4	17.4	13	56.5
	22	22.6	23	23.7	9	29.0	10	32.3	12	38.7
	13	13.4	14	14.3	6	31.6	2	10.5	11	57.9
	19	19.6	22	22.4	11	40.7	5	18.5	11	40.7

**Note:** Not represented by this table are those services which were used infrequently by the sample surveyed. These services include: counselling for children, Family and Children's Services, Atenlos, Court Witness Assistance Program, Crisis Telephone Service.

Table 28

**Victims' Court Experience Regarding  
Wife Assault Charges Laid in 1988 - 1989**

Court Outcome*	1979		1983		1989/90	
	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%
Dismissed or withdrawn	20	38.4	9	16.4	5	10.9
Fine	3	5.8	16	29.1	17	43.6
Fail	4	7.7	4	7.3	7	17.9
Probation	14	26.9	10	18.2	18	46.2

\* Sample sizes are as follows: 1979, n = 52; 1983, n = 55; 1989/1990, n varies from 39 to 46 due to missing data.

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