



Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline

1800 341 900

Working to end domestic violence

Statistics Report 2005

Important Note on the Women's Aid Helpline Statistics

The information collected relates to details and facts disclosed by callers in the process of their contact with the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline. As the primary aim of the service is to provide support and information to callers, the service does not seek to solicit information for statistical purposes. For this reason, only partial information is available to us on the majority of callers, most particularly in relation to the extent of abuse being experienced and the barriers and obstacles to help-seeking.

Introduction

The statistics below relate to the period January 1st to December 31st, 2005. The statistics have been collected by volunteers and staff of the Helpline and have been collated to give a broad overview of contacts with the service. The National Freephone Helpline is open every day of the year (except Christmas Day) from 10am to 10pm. It is the main service provided by Women's Aid to those experiencing domestic violence and the access point to the other Women's Aid services (one-to-one support visits and court accompaniment). Referrals are also made to other services throughout Ireland.

Women's Aid would like to sincerely thank all the volunteers and staff of the National Freephone Helpline.

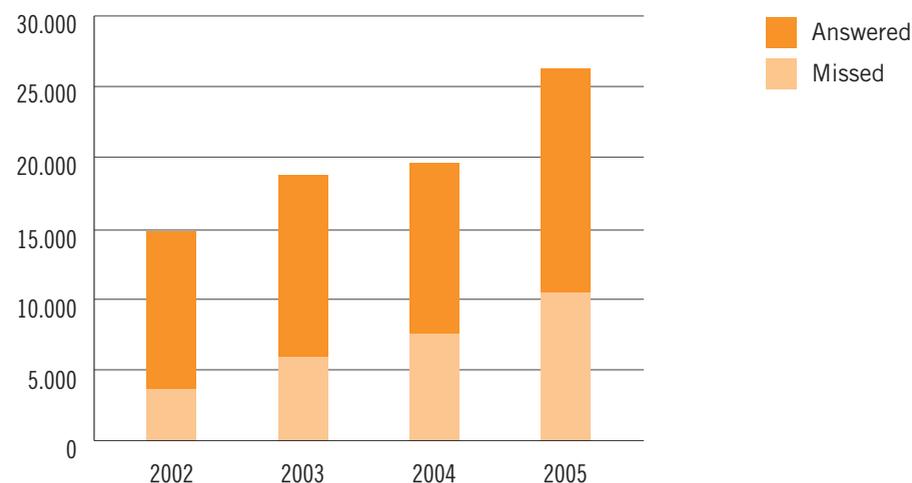
2005 In Brief

In 2005, 25,843 calls were **made** to the Women's Aid Helpline, an increase of 30% on calls made to the service in 2004 (19,901 calls were made in 2004).

The Women's Aid Helpline **responded** to 15,339 calls, an increase of 26% on 2004 figures.

The Women's Aid Helpline recorded 10,504 **missed** calls (calls which could not be answered as the service was working to capacity/ all support workers were engaged on the lines) in 2005 which is a 29% increase on the number of calls we could not answer in 2004.

Increased Demand: Call Trends Since 2002



	Answered	Missed	Total
2002	11037	3935	14,972
2003	12908	5994	18,902
2004	12147	7754	19,901
2005	15339	10504	25,843

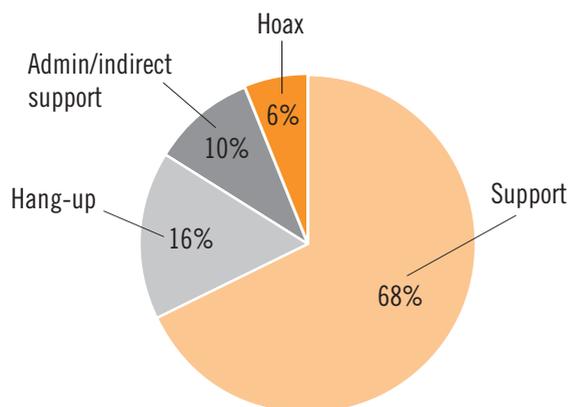
The **Graph** above indicates there has been a very significant increase in calls made to the Helpline, from 14,972 in 2002 to 25,843 in 2005. This represents a 73% increase in calls received between 2002 and 2005.

It is of concern, however, that the proportion of total calls which were missed has increased each year from 26% in 2002 to a worrying 40% in 2005. This means that women who gather the courage to make contact with our service are not always able to get through. How many of those women are in immediate crisis and in need of immediate referral to refuge or emergency accommodation is unknown. While calls to the Helpline grew by 10,871 between 2002 and 2005, funding of the service was effectively capped during this period.

Calls Received

Chart 1 indicates the types of calls received by Women's Aid's National Freephone Helpline. The vast majority of calls were support calls with women experiencing physical, mental, sexual and/or financial abuse at the hands of an intimate male partner.

Types of Calls



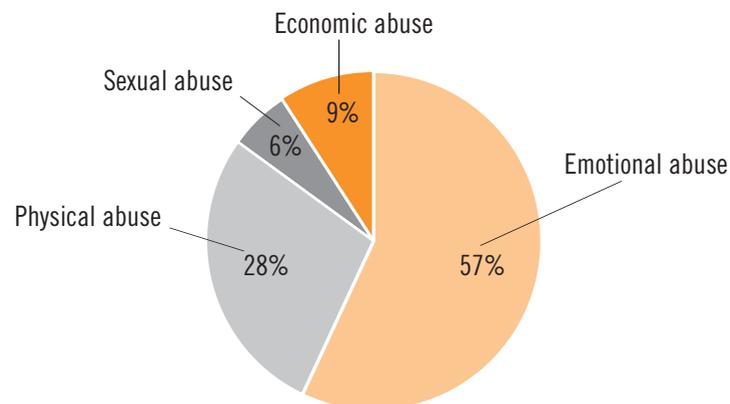
In a much smaller number of support calls women were seeking support or information on issues either indirectly related or unrelated to domestic abuse; these calls included support and information on family planning, bereavement, parenting alone or legal information on topics such as employment and equality legislation and criminal law.

Admin/indirect support calls refers in the main to the many calls that the Helpline receives from voluntary and statutory bodies looking for information or support on issues arising in their work in relation to domestic abuse. The individuals using our service include: members of An Garda Síochána, social workers, local support services, GPs and hospital staff.

Incidents of Abuse

Chart 2 details the incidents of abuse disclosed by callers to the Helpline. Many callers disclose that they have experienced multiple forms of abuse at the hands of their abuser.

Types of abuse Chart 2



Emotional Abuse	7589
Physical Abuse	3781
Sexual Abuse*	821
Economic abuse	1154
Total	13345

* 371 specific reports of rape.

The tactics of abuse used by perpetrators are deliberate, controlling and unrelenting. The repetitive nature of the abuse has the effect of wearing a woman down gradually, making her doubt herself, putting her in fear, isolating her from supports such as friends and family and making her feel worthless and degraded.

A large number of the abusive tactics disclosed by women are extremely threatening and in some cases leave women completely controlled and in fear for their lives. Even where no physical abuse has *actually* been perpetrated, the threat of such violence has an equally devastating impact.

Tactics of Abuse Disclosed by Callers Include:

Physical Abuse:

- Struck with golf clubs
- Thrown against the wall
- Hit with a hammer
- Burnt with an iron
- Shot at

Emotional Abuse:

- Stalked and watched constantly
- Denied food for days
- Having to ask permission to turn on lights and move from one room to another
- Prevented from accessing education/training or any social activities
- Not being allowed access to house keys – being locked in

Sexual Abuse:

- Forced into prostitution
- Coerced into re-enacting pornography
- Rape

Financial/Economic abuse:

- Coerced into signing over property or assets
- Denied any access to money, even for household basics

Impacts of Abuse

The impacts reported by women experiencing such abuse are significant and wide ranging.

The impacts of physical violence disclosed include:

- Serious physical injuries
- Miscarriage
- Foetal abnormalities through abuse during pregnancy
- Permanent disability

The impacts of mental/ emotional abuse include:

- Extreme terror – in some cases women call the Helpline from a locked room that they are afraid or unable to leave
- Severe depression

- Attempted suicide
- Sense of complete hopelessness and paralysis (feeling that nowhere will be safe)

Where women report physical abuse it almost always forms part of a wider pattern where she is also experiencing emotional and psychological abuse. This form of abuse can have devastating consequences for women and many report that it is this abuse that they feel is the most damaging to their self esteem and sense of self and, in some cases, their mental health.

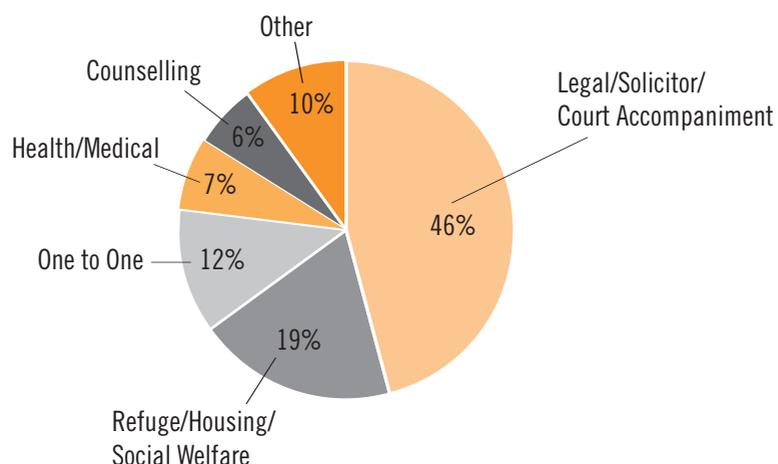
Repeat and First Time Contacts with the Helpline

In 2005, **49%** of callers were in repeat contact with the service. In some cases women will use the service for years to access non-directive support while coping with or overcoming their experiences of abuse. From the percentage of repeat callers it can be surmised that up to **51%** of callers accessed support for the first time with Women's Aid in 2005.

Services Provided

Chart 3 illustrates the types of services that the Helpline provided in 2005. As the vast majority of calls have a support element the chart below only notes additional services that were provided.

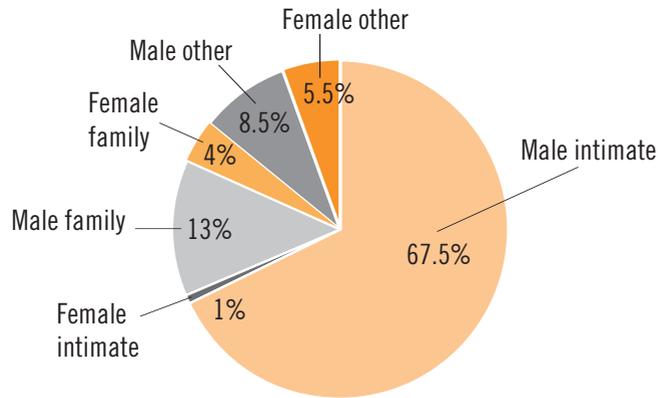
Services Offered Chart 3



Perpetrators of Abuse

Chart 4 shows the relationship between the caller and their abuser.

Perpetrators of Abuse Chart 4



Male intimate includes: (current or former) spouse, co-habitee or partner. As Chart 4 illustrates, 67.5% of abusers were male intimates.

This breaks down as follows:

Husband	33.5%
Partner	10.5%
Male co-habitee	3.5%
Ex-husband	6%
Ex-partner	12%
Ex male co-habitee	2%
Total	67.5%

Almost half (47.5%) of the abuse disclosed was perpetrated by a current male partner/spouse, with marriage remaining the most common context for abuse.

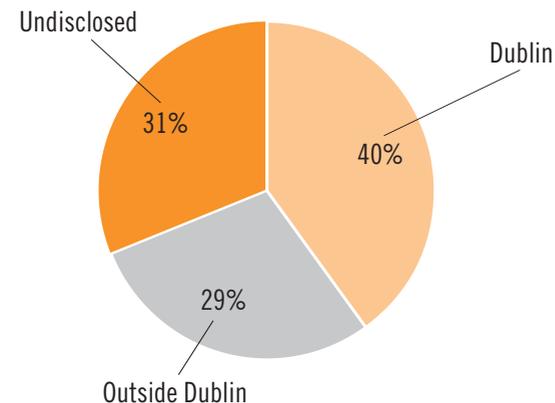
Following abuse by a current partner/spouse, women were most likely to experience abuse by a former spouse/partner (20%). Types of abuse disclosed after a relationship has ended included: continued physical abuse, harassment, threats, stalking, abuse of woman during child access visits and financial abuse such as non-payment of maintenance.

The high levels of abuse which women experience post-separation, illustrate the continued risk which perpetrators pose, even where women have managed to leave the relationship. 14% of women experienced abuse by a former partner to whom they had not been married. This group of women are especially vulnerable as many are not eligible to apply for protection under the Domestic Violence Act 1996 and thus have less recourse to immediate protection than married women who leave an abusive partner.

Location of Callers

40% of callers who contacted us were residing in the greater Dublin area. Just under a third of callers, 29%, called from outside Dublin demonstrating the national impact of the Helpline. In 31% of calls, the location of the caller was unknown.

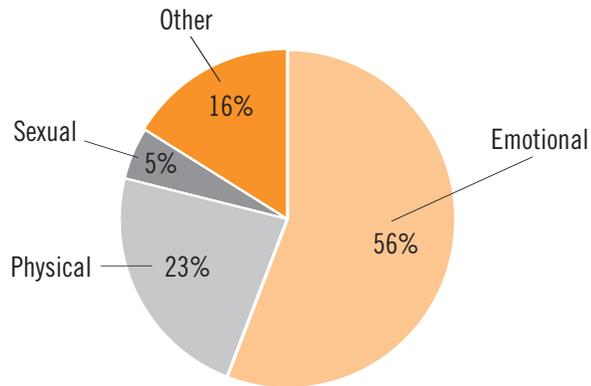
Location of Callers Chart 6



Abuse of Children

In 2005, there were **1,504** specific incidents of child abuse disclosed by callers to the Helpline (see **Chart 5**). This relates to incidents where the male perpetrator was also directly abusing the children of the relationship, as well as the mother.

Abuse of Children Chart 5



The kinds of abusive tactics being used against children in domestic abuse situations reported to us in 2005 include:

- Beating with weapons
- Sexual assault
- Attempted murder
- Punched in the face
- Thrown across a room
- Locked in rooms/small spaces

Abuse of Children and Access

Included in the 'other' category above, are 4% of callers who described how access visits were being used by violent men to abuse the children of the relationship. Women's Aid is very concerned at the ways in which access visits are used by perpetrators to maintain control of both the woman and her children.

Women disclosed the following types of abuse which occurred during access visits:

- Driving under the influence of alcohol/drugs with children
- Not feeding or washing children
- Refusing to return children to their mothers (in some instances where they are breast fed and suffer hunger and distress)

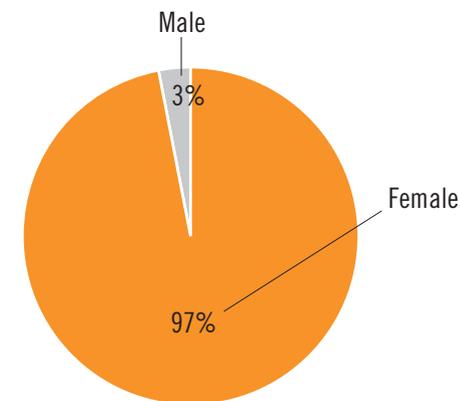
In addition to the 1,504 incidents of specific child abuse, in **3,869** calls where abuse of a woman was disclosed, there were children in the relationship. In the majority of those instances, it is likely that children will have witnessed or heard the abuse of their mother.

As the Women's Aid Helpline does not solicit information from callers and only notes what is disclosed in the natural course of calls, we believe that the above figures represent the tip of the iceberg in relation to children's experience of abuse in the home, where their mother is also suffering.

Gender of Callers

The vast majority of the callers to the Helpline were women, 97%, and 3% of the calls were made by men.

Gender of Callers Chart 7



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