MENCALLTIME: A MIXED METHODS ANALYSIS OF DATA TRENDS AND MEN'S EXPERIENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IN IRELAND

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Glossary of terms

During the preparation of the report, the research team sought clarification about the meaning of terms relating to domestic violence and abuse within the database under exploration in this study. The following terms below are the working definitions of the terms used by Men's Aid staff during the course of their work.

An Garda Síochána (AGS): An Garda Síochána is Ireland's National Police and Security Service.

***Barring order (BO)*:** A barring order is an order of the court which requires the violent person to leave the family home. This order also prohibits the person from further violence or threats of violence, and from watching or being near the home of the applicant. A barring order can last up to three years.

***Coercive control*:** Acts relating to obtaining complete control over partner (either within a relationship, as a form of second wave abuse, or post relationship) For example, not allowing a partner to go to work or school, restricting access to transportation, taking phone and changing passwords, not allowing partner to see family or friends without permission, not permitting partner access to money, threats of violence or violence in order to control, control over partner' social media. Complete control of partner.

***Economic abuse**:* Any form of financial abuse, no access to money, not permitted to have your own bank account or access to your own bank card. All your funds going into a joint bank account that you cannot access. Being coerced or threatened into obtaining loans in your name but having to give the money to your partner. Your partner keeping all joint social welfare payment or pension.

Emotional abuse: Emotional abuse includes verbal abuse and criticising partners looks, body, criticising friends, family and name calling.

***Interim barring order (IBO)*:** This is an immediate order requiring the violent person to leave the family home. It is issued only in exceptional circumstances and lasts until the application for the barring order has been heard by the court. After this point, if the applicant is successful, a barring order will take its place for whatever period has been ordered by the court, with an upper limit of three years.

Emergency barring order (EBO) Unlike an Interim barring order the applicant does not have to satisfy the property test to be able to get an emergency barring order. This means the applicant does not need to own or co-own or have their name on the lease of the property.

***Legal orders*:** Legal orders are granted where by the court if it believes that the safety and welfare of an applicant, or the safety and welfare of a dependant of the applicant requires that an order is granted. Safety and welfare includes both physical and psychological welfare. Legal orders covering domestic violence include protection orders, safety orders, interim barring orders and barring orders.

Online abuse: any form of abuse using social media to - damage character, make false accusations, upload private photos, continuously call, text, email, etc.

***Parental alienation*:** This relates to emotional abuse of children. Not permitting access by creating a false sense of fear against the other parent. Withholding affection if the child wants a relationship with the other parent. Not permitting the child to speak about the other parent or extended family.

Pet abuse: Physical abuse of pets as a form of punishment if partner is disobedient. Threats to harm pets as a form of control. Threats to give pets away.

Protection order (PO): This is an immediate order issued while the applicant is waiting for the court to hear their application for a safety order. It has the same effect as a safety order but only lasts until the application for the safety order has been heard by the court. After this point, if the applicant is successful, a safety order will take its place for whatever period has been ordered by the court, with an upper limit of five years.

***Psychological abuse*:** Gaslighting, hiding property, frighten mentally, deliberately confuse or influence thoughts, changing their sense of security, threaten to harm children or loved ones, embarrass in public etc.

***Physical abuse*:** Any form of abuse that can physically harm - hitting, slapping, kicking, biting, poisoning, withholding medication, etc.

***Safety order* (SO)**: A safety order is an order of the court which prohibits the violent person from further violence or threats of violence. It does not oblige the person to leave the family home. It prohibits the person from watching or being near the home of the applicant if they are not currently resident with the applicant. A safety order can last for up to five years.

***Second wave abuse*:** Abuse that is initiated by the abusive partner but not enacted by them. It can continue when the victim leaves the relationship through online abuse, using the courts service, threats, using children etc.

Sexual abuse*:* All types of unwanted sexual touching, being coerced into taking part in unwanted sexual behaviour that they are uncomfortable with, being forced to engage in sexual behaviour against will. Threats to divulge private information.

Introduction

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) is a widespread and damaging issue that affects people in every country and places a heavy burden on individuals, families, and health and justice systems (Krug et al., 2002). DVA takes many forms, including physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse, as well as controlling behaviours such as isolating a partner or monitoring their movements (Krug et al., 2002). Perpetrators can cause harm through direct or indirect means. Although DVA can affect people regardless of gender, it has traditionally been framed as violence perpetrated by men against women (Hine, Bates and Wallace, 2022; Corbally, Hine and Kestell, 2023). As a result, male victims have often been overlooked and described as a "hidden" victim group, despite longstanding evidence that men can experience abuse from female partners (Hine, Bates and Wallace, 2022). Their experiences remain comparatively under-researched, while their needs and access to appropriate support services have frequently been neglected (Huntley et al., 2019).

Available prevalence data indicate that male victimisation represents a substantial but frequently overlooked problem. In the United States, nearly one in three men has experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner during his lifetime, while approximately one in nine has experienced such violence and reported an associated impact, such as injury, fear or concern for safety (Smith et al., 2017). In England and Wales, roughly one in three people estimated to have experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023 was male, equivalent to approximately 751,000 men (Office for National Statistics, 2023). While international evidence highlights the scale of male victimisation, research from Ireland remains comparatively limited. Nevertheless, the available evidence suggests that domestic abuse against men is also a significant concern within the Irish context. One of the most comprehensive Irish studies was conducted by the National Crime Council (NCC) in partnership with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). Drawing on a representative sample of more than 3,000 adults, including 1,458 men, the study estimated that approximately 15% of women and 6% of men had experienced "severely abusive behaviour of a physical, sexual or emotional nature from an intimate partner at some time in their lives" (Watson & Parsons, 2005). Although these findings are now over two decades old, they provide important evidence that men constitute a significant minority of domestic abuse victims in Ireland (Corbally, Hine and Kestell, 2023). The absence of more recent national prevalence data highlights the need for further research to better understand the contemporary scale, characteristics, and consequences of male victimisation within the Irish context.

A key reason why male victims remain hidden is the relationship between abuse and masculinity. Masculinity is built around ideals such as strength, control and independence, and being abused by a partner sits awkwardly against these expectations (Connell, 2005). Because of this, men are often less willing than women to describe themselves as victims,

and may feel shame, fear that they will not be believed, or worry that they will be treated as the abuser rather than the victim (Huntley et al., 2019).

Together, these pressures help to explain why relatively few men seek formal support. In the national study of domestic abuse in Ireland, only 7% of male victims sought support from formal organisations, despite relatively high awareness of helplines and other available services (Watson and Parsons, 2005). Research with specialist helpline staff suggests that men may hesitate to make contact because services do not appear available or appropriate for them and because they fear disbelief or judgement. Providers also face challenges arising from gender stereotypes and limited resources (Hine, Bates and Wallace, 2022). Nevertheless, telephone helplines can provide a confidential first point of contact for male victims. Large-scale UK service studies have developed a clearer picture of who presents to specialist services, kinds of abuse reported and outcomes when clients leave services (Hine et al., 2022b, 2022c). Separate research has examined the experiences of LGBT clients (Hine, Graham-Kevan and Graham-Kevan, 2023) further broadening our understanding regarding the phenomenon of male victimisation.

Historically, support for male victims in Ireland was very limited, but thankfully this is slowly improving due to a variety of factors. From a governmental perspective, subsequent national strategies have assisted in improving national responses to the problem of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV). The commitment to establishing Cuan, the new statutory agency in 2024 has represented a welcome strategic direction aimed towards zero tolerance of DSGBV across the island of Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2022). New legislation has also proved helpful, notably Section 39 of the Domestic Violence Act 2018 creating the criminal offence of coercive control (Government of Ireland, 2018). This is particularly important for men as evidence increasingly suggests that coercive control is a notable form of domestic violence and abuse (DVA) experienced by men. Rather than involving isolated incidents of physical violence, coercive control comprises a sustained pattern of emotional, psychological, financial, and social abuse designed to dominate and restrict a partner's autonomy. Research has demonstrated that male victims frequently experience intimidation, gaslighting, financial control, social isolation, monitoring of movements, and manipulation through children (Graham-Kevan & Powney, 2021).

Despite progress in certain areas, there remains relatively little research on male victims in Ireland. Information on DVA prevalence amongst men, male victimisation experiences and service utilisation has been ongoing but remains limited. Previous Irish research has proved useful in providing baseline information about service contacts and utilisation (Corbally, Hine and Kestell, 2023). The MENCALLHELP 1 and 2 studies (Corbally, Paul and Callan 2025) proved useful in highlighting call characteristics, needs and experiences of those who contact Irish national male victimisation helplines. The MENCALLTIME study owes its origin from the ongoing collaborative research relationship between staff at Trinity College Dublin and staff at Men's Aid Ireland. During these earlier studies, many discussions regarding

unexplored aspects relating to male victimisation and service utilisation pointed towards conducting something not attempted previously - a study to explore the influence of time.

Men's Aid Ireland is a national service for men affected by DVA providing a national helpline, email contact, one-to-one support, counselling, community outreach and court clinics. It also launched a dedicated LGBT+ domestic-violence education programme in 2022. Findings from this study have the potential to inform these essential services as well as other services charged with responding to those experiencing DVA and prompting a safer Ireland for all.

Executive Summary

The MENCALLTIME study comprised of a sequential mixed methods study. The quantitative (numerical) phase of the study analysed three calendar years of anonymised data received by the Men's Aid Ireland helpline. This part of the study examined the content, nature and characteristics of contacts to the service as well as exploring time specific patterns or trends (seasonality). Analysis of the contacts to the service as well as clients of the service was undertaken. The qualitative (narrative interview) phase of the study examined men's life story accounts of their DVA experience over time.

Findings from the quantitative (numerical study)

- A total of 22,524 contacts made by 4532 clients were recorded between January 2022 and December 2024.
- Annual contact volumes declined slightly, from 7,791 in 2022 to 7,295 in 2024
- Telephone contacts declined across the study period, from 3,430 in 2022 to 2,772 in 2024. Text message contacts remained relatively stable. Email contacts declined slightly from 2022 before stabilising in 2023 and 2024.
- Overall contact volumes were relatively higher during February, June and November whereas lower volumes were observed during December and several months in the spring and summer.
- Service activity was highest on Tuesdays.
- No clear evidence of annual seasonality was identified across any of the contact categories.
- Among the 2,596 male victims included in the analysis, 1,850 (71.3%) reported having children, while 746 (28.7%) did not.
- Of the male victim cohort, 1,155 (45.8%) were not living together, while 989 (39.2%) were living together. A further 380 (15.1%) were classified as moving in and out.
- More than three-quarters of victims (76.2%) made multiple contacts with the service.

- Among the 2,596 male victims with available abuse information, emotional abuse affected 86.6%, followed by psychological abuse, 71.4%.
- Physical abuse was documented for 39.1% of victims, while coercive abuse was identified in 30.9%.
- Emotional abuse was recorded for 81.5% of victims not living together, 91.5% of those living together, and 95% of those classified as moving in and out.
- Compared with victims with one contact, those with two to five contacts had more than twice the odds, while those with six or more contacts had more than five times the odds of experiencing coercive abuse.
- The number of contacts was also associated with sexual abuse. Compared with victims with one contact, those with six or more contacts had almost three times higher odds of sexual abuse being recorded.

Findings from the qualitative (narrative interview study)

- Critical Life Events rather than seasons/calendar events influenced men's lives and relationships. Such events were often described as turning points that marked where abuse could no longer be ignored, tolerated, or rationalised. These moments were frequently associated with physical violence experienced, false allegations, Garda involvement, separation, legal proceedings, or a sudden realisation of the extent of the abuse.
- Feelings of shame, fear, self-doubt, and concerns about their children often delayed disclosure. When they eventually sought help, support came from a range of sources including family members, employers, counsellors, community organisations, peer-support groups, and specialist services for men experiencing domestic abuse.
- Most participants sought help at a time when they felt overwhelmed, isolated, or unable to cope with the impact of abuse and relationship breakdown. Contact with Men's Aid followed a period of deteriorating mental health and, in some cases, suicidal thoughts.
- Across participants' accounts, coercive control emerged as pervasive. The cumulative impact was profound, resulting in feelings of fear, shame, emotional exhaustion, reduced self-confidence, autonomy, personal identity and, for some men, thoughts of suicide.
- Participants described experiencing financial abuse, loss of autonomy, social isolation, surveillance, emotional manipulation, threats, and the use of children. Evidence of second wave abuse was also identified.
- Financial abuse was a prominent feature, with participants reporting restricted access to wages, bank accounts, and household finances.
- Verbal abuse and gaslighting further undermined self-esteem and led many men to question their memories, judgement, and abilities as fathers and partners.

- Children were described as a central mechanism of control. Participants described threats regarding child access, interference with father-child relationships, and situations in which children were exposed to hostility toward their fathers. Many men remained in abusive relationships because they feared losing contact with their children. Following separation, these concerns often intensified through legal disputes and protracted family court proceedings.
- Children were described as among the primary victims of both the abuse and the subsequent conflict. Experiences with TUSLA were mixed. While some participants felt the agency played an important role in safeguarding children and recognising the value of father-child relationships, others reported frustration with investigations, delays, and inconsistent responses.

Recommendations

- Continuity of service support is important as most male victims contact the service on multiple occasions over time.
- Service provision should continue to pay particular attention to male victims who contact services frequently over time.
- Service provision should continue to pay particular attention to fathers who may experience additional challenges over time.
- Expansion of services access to improve geographical accessibility to male victims nationally would be beneficial.
- Increased national awareness of men's domestic abuse services would be helpful.
- Attention to giving a caller ID or reference code to anonymous callers would be useful in enabling the potential development of a 'client' profile for men to benefit from continuity of service.

Literature Review

Introduction

Although domestic violence and abuse (DVA) can affect individuals of any gender, it has historically been conceptualised as a phenomenon involving male perpetrators and female victims Enakele (2019). While women continue to experience a disproportionate burden of severe DVA, growing evidence demonstrates that men experience victimisation within intimate relationships (Huntley et al., 2019) This traditional gendered framing has contributed to the relative invisibility of male victims in research, policy development, and service provision (Hine, Bates, et al., 2022). Men's DVA experiences can include physical, psychological and sexual violence, financial abuse, controlling behaviours. Indirect abuse (second wave abuse) including the use of children, initiation of others to contribute to abusing the man as well as destruction of property has also been identified (Corbally, 2015; Hine et al., 2020; Javanoski and Sharlamanov, 2021). Legal and administrative aggression' (Hines, Douglas & Berger, 2015) and reported qualitatively (Drijber, Reijnders & Ceelen, 2013) is also a form of second wave abuse.

Whilst a critical lack of research in relation to prevalence and trends relating to male DVA victimisation exists internationally (Spikol et al 2024) no large scale data analysis or examination of the impact of time, events or seasonality had ever been undertaken. This literature review explored three main aspects namely: (1) seasonality and trends in DVA/IPV generally; (2) seasonality and trends in relation to the male experience; and (3) masculinity and the male experience of abuse. The terms domestic violence, domestic abuse, intimate partner violence (IPV) and DVA are used interchangeably throughout.

Method of review

A structured, transparent evidence synthesis (a rapid/scoping-style review) was undertaken. Searching was conducted by a single reviewer and the search relied on freely accessible scholarly search engines and indexes. Sources actually searched (September 2026) included PubMed/MEDLINE (public interface); Google Scholar–indexed results and general scholarly web search (which surface publisher pages, PubMed Central, institutional repositories and preprints); publisher/journal pages (Sage, Springer, Wiley, Elsevier, Taylor & Francis, MDPI, Oxford, APA PsycNet); and the Crossref REST API (used both for discovery and for bibliographic verification). Grey literature and official sources were searched directly: the Central Statistics Office (Ireland), the Economic and Social Research Institute, An Garda Síochána, Men's Aid Ireland, the US Bureau of Justice Statistics, the ManKind Initiative, and relevant government strategy documents. The search targeted peer-reviewed literature with no lower date restriction (the oldest included empirical work dated to 2000; and foundational items such as Archer, 2000 were included), through to September 2026. Language was restricted to English. Both quantitative and qualitative designs were eligible. Searches crossed three concept areas (1) Domestic Violence and Abuse, (2) Time related

(temporal) and seasonality and finally (3) Masculinity and help seeking. Records were screened in two stages. At title/abstract stage, items were retained if they concerned (a) DVA/IPV, (b) a temporal/seasonal/trend dimension, or (c) men's experiences, masculinity or help-seeking. Our review found that there was some evidence of time related effects for female victimisation. However, **no dedicated study of male-victim DVA abuse seasonality, calendar effects or event effects identified in the searches undertaken.** Evidence of effects relating to crucial life events was identified for male and female victims. The following pages provide an overview of the outcome of the review process. Additional useful tables pertaining to individual analysis of articles can be found in the Appendices of this report.

Findings from the literature: time related trends and the male experience of DVA

Time related trends cover several distinct phenomena: seasonality, calendar effects and event effects. Seasonality relates to recurring within-year variation (month/season). Calendar effects are holidays, weekends and days of the week. Event effects are short responses to discrete triggers (e.g. a sporting event, a heat wave, a national lockdown). Secular trends are long-run changes across years.

Some of the challenges in DVA research reviewed relate to the variations in DVA definition and the outcome measured: surveys count self-reported victimisation, police count reported incidents, services count contacts etc. A pattern emerging in one does not necessarily license a claim about another. Koutaniemi and Einö (2019) show this directly in Finland, where the seasonality of help-seeking (online searches) did not mirror the seasonality of police calls.

Evidence for smooth seasonal waves was real but modest – relating to female victimisation only. National victimisation data show some violent victimisation is modestly higher in warmer months, varying by crime type (Lauritsen & White, 2014) and largely related to violence against women. The most rigorous recent time-series — a seasonal analysis of 74,776 police-recorded IPV incidents in Los Angeles between, 2020–2023 found modest changes in the seasons and against making any claims in relation to this (Hughes 2025). Sanz-Barbero et al. (2018) found IPV emergency calls, reports and femicides in Madrid rose in the days following heat and heat waves — a lagged, ecological, female-victim design. Assault-injury presentations to US emergency departments for were elevated around major holidays (Khurana, Prakash & Loder, 2022), and help-seeking indicators (searches, calls) rise around Christmas and New Year (Koutaniemi & Einö, 2019) but these are not necessarily linked to DVA presentation.

The clearest time related signals relating DVA appear to be event-linked (again with a notable absence of male victimisation data). Card and Dahl (2011) found unexpected losses by a local American-football team produced a 10% rise in police reports of at-home male-on-female violence in the hours after the game, whereas expected results did not. Kirby, Francis and O'Flaherty (2014) found English domestic-abuse reports rose by 26% when the

national team played during World Cups and by 38% when it lost, with a rising baseline across tournaments. Evidence of major-event effects also appear in healthcare data where assault-related emergency department visits in the United States increase around the NFL's Super Bowl (Khurana, Prakash, Chopra & Loder, 2023). There was no male victimisation research study identified. Economic conditions matter too: Schneider, Harknett and McLanahan (2016) historically linked rapid rises in local unemployment and economic uncertainty during the Great Recession to increases in abusive behaviour (predominantly towards women).

The COVID-19 pandemic produced the best-evidenced time related effect on DVA disclosures and presentation to services. Piquero et al.'s (2021) international meta-analysis found an 8% increase in domestic violence following stay-at-home orders, with individual jurisdictions reporting larger rises (Boserup, McKenney & Elkbuli, 2020). In Ireland, a distinct increase in contacts to services from both genders was evident (Corbally, Paul and Callan 2025).

The strongest finding relating to time in the broader literature is relational not to calendar events but to life events. For women, the perinatal period has long been associated with increases in DVA (World Health Organisation 2021). Other life events appear to be associated with increased DVA experiences. The period of separation is associated with higher risks of DVA (Einö et al., 2023). Research on divorce filings has identified a twice-yearly spike, in March and August - after the winter holidays and after the summer (Brines & Serafini, 2016) though this data does not directly relate to DVA. Evidence of increased DVA in earlier studies of a male population identified that men faced twice the odds of multiple forms of DVA if they lived intermittently with their partner (Corbally, Paul and Callan 2025). Analyses of male victims from police narratives (Karystianis et al., 2024) and UK helpline call data (Hine, Wallace & Bates, 2022) profile male victims in detail but do not analyse timing. On trends in demand, Men's Aid Ireland reports year-on-year growth in contacts (8,682 in 2023) and a 37% spike during COVID-19, but these are service-contact trends shaped by awareness and capacity as much as by abuse. The nearest male service-contact analysis, the MENCALLHELP profile of Men's Aid data (Corbally, Hine & Kestell, 2023), describes call characteristics but does not focus on time related aspects.

There are some challenges for men which might inhibit the timeliness of an abusive event and subsequent help seeking. Men's recognition of their experience as abuse is problematic. Often, they do not name their experience as abuse, and as a result recognition is fragmented (Corbally, 2024; Corbally, 2015; Huntley et al., 2019). Additionally, shame, embarrassment and denial have been identified as inhibiting factors preventing disclosure and support seeking (Bates, 2020; McLeod et al., 2024; Waila et al., 2025; Hogan, Clarke & Ward, 2021).

The act of disclosure is heavily filtered by masculinity, shame and fear of disbelief (Huntley et al., 2019; Bates, 2020). As a result, the interval between an abusive act and any service

contact is therefore likely longer and more variable for men than for women. Well supported. Dominant norms of manhood such as strength, self-reliance, stoicism, the man as protector rather than protected make victimhood for men, feel incompatible with masculine identity, a mechanism recurring across systematic reviews (Huntley et al., 2019; McLeod et al., 2024; Scott-Storey et al., 2023) and primary studies (Bates, 2020; Taylor et al., 2022; Walklate et al., 2022). Huntley et al. (2019) synthesise five barriers which inhibit men's help seeking: fear of disclosure; challenge to masculinity; commitment to the relationship; diminished confidence after prolonged abuse; and the invisibility of services. Taylor et al. (2022), Douglas and Hines (2011) and Hogan et al. (2021) converge, adding gendered service design and fear of losing children as important factors.

When men seek help, some research studies have identified that at variation in services responses, with some unhelpful and potentially harmful responses. Douglas and Hine's (2011) study of helpline services identified that some men were treated as the perpetrator. However, more recent research on specialist male helplines have illustrated improved and targeted responses to male victims with the professional staff response being a crucial factor (Hine, Wallace & Bates, 2022; Hine, Bates & Wallace, 2022; Corbally, Hine & Kestell, 2023).

Being a father has been identified previously as a key factor in men's identities (Corbally 2011). Where the life event of DVA is concerned, children are central to men's help-seeking and to staying/leaving decisions; fear of losing contact with children is a recurrent barrier (Taylor et al., 2022; Machado & Farinha, 2023) and a very real one as evidence of further loss of fathering opportunities has been identified by subsequent studies (Corbally 2011, Hine, Wallace and Bates 2022). Evidence from support services reinforces these findings. Benjamin Hine, Sarah Wallace, and Elizabeth Bates analysed data from 719 men contacting a UK domestic abuse helpline and found that men most commonly sought support for emotional and psychological abuse rather than physical assaults. Many described long-term patterns of control, intimidation, and emotional manipulation that profoundly affected their wellbeing and help-seeking behaviours (Hine, Wallace, et al., 2022).

In summary: **no dedicated study of seasonality or temporal patterning among male victims of DVA was identified in the searches undertaken as part of our literature review process.** There was some evidence of male-victimisation evident in the literature, however it is overwhelmingly cross-sectional and profile-based: it describes who men are, what they experience and why they do or do not seek help, but not how any of this is distributed in time. The large temporal studies identified did not disaggregate by victim sex (Card & Dahl, 2011; Kirby et al., 2014; Piquero et al., 2021; Khurana et al., 2022, 2023; Hughes, 2025) or were explicitly female-focused (Sanz-Barbero et al., 2018; Brownridge et al., 2008).

The MENCALLTIME Study

Study aims and objectives

The aim of the MENCALLTIME study was to explore patterns over time relating to male victims of domestic violence and abuse (DVA).

The objectives of the proposal were:

- To explore seasonality of DVA contacts over particular time points (e.g. Christmas, Easter)
- To explore trends in DVA call characteristics (e.g. crisis calls, emails, text messages, call outcomes)
- To explore trends in variables over time (e.g. DVA worsening following leaving the home, trends in client contact with service)
- To explore men's accounts of their life story of DVA and ascertain any similar patterns and turning points between the chronology of the life story experience

This study adopted sequential mixed methods of inquiry to achieve the aims of the study and provide distinct but complimentary perspectives regarding DVA and how it is experienced over time. This involved utilising both quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (narrative interview based approach). Two quantitative studies were undertaken and one qualitative study was undertaken. Further details regarding the particular methodological approaches are provided in the relevant sections.

Ethical approval

This study received ethical approval from the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Ref 26408). Part of the conditions of ethical approval process for the qualitative study required that all identifying information be pseudonymised (de-identified). This time consuming but necessary process was completed and the study was undertaken in full accordance with all ethical requirements.

Quantitative analysis 1: Contacts to Men's Aid Ireland

Methodology

Study design and data

A retrospective, descriptive time-series analysis was conducted to examine temporal trends, patterns of service utilisation and potential seasonality in contacts and recorded abuse counts between 1 January 2022 and 31 December 2024. The analysis covered three consecutive calendar years and considered overall contact volumes alongside three individual communication channels: telephone calls, text messages and emails.

The primary objective was to determine whether service contact volumes and recorded abuse counts exhibited recurring temporal patterns, including differences across weekdays, months and years, and whether these patterns provided evidence of seasonality.

Data preparation and aggregation

Contact records were organised chronologically using their recorded dates. Contacts were classified by communication channel, and total contact volumes were calculated across all channels. Total recorded abuse counts were also obtained from the corresponding records. The data were aggregated at three temporal window frames to examine patterns occurring over different periods: Daily, Weekly, Monthly. For weekday-based analyses, attention was restricted to Monday through Friday to reflect the principal operating days of the service and avoid distortion arising from the very low volume of weekend contacts.

Descriptive analyses were conducted to characterise the distribution of contacts and recorded abuse counts across the study period. Annual contact totals were calculated for the overall service and separately for telephone calls, text messages and emails. Annual total abuse counts were also calculated. Monthly average contact volumes were examined to identify periods of relatively higher and lower service activity. Additionally, weekday distributions were compared across the three years to assess differences in contact volumes by day of the week. Corresponding monthly and weekday patterns in recorded abuse counts were also examined. Graphical visualisations, including bar charts and chronological line plots, were used to illustrate changes in contact volumes and recorded abuse counts over time and facilitate comparisons between communication channels.

Time-series analyses were undertaken to investigate recurring temporal patterns in contact volumes and recorded abuse counts. Separate time series were constructed for total contacts and each communication channel, as well as total abuse counts, at daily, weekly and monthly window frames. Chronological line plots were visually examined to identify changes in contact volumes, recurring peaks and troughs, and potential seasonal patterns. Comparisons across calendar years were used to assess whether fluctuations occurred at similar times in successive years. Autocorrelation function (ACF) analyses were performed to assess the correlation between contact volumes or recorded abuse. Accordingly, recurring autocorrelation patterns were interpreted as suggestive rather than conclusive evidence of seasonality.

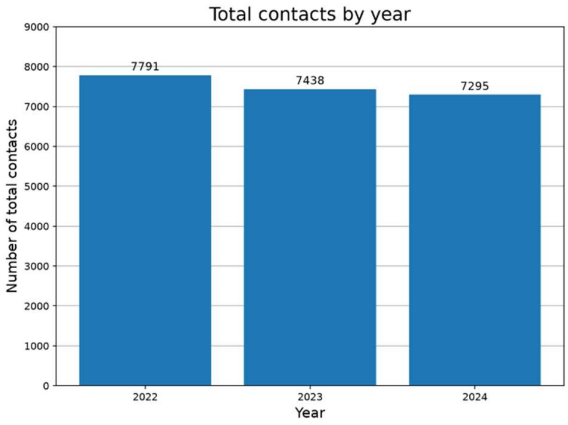
Characteristics of service contacts

A total of 22,524 contacts were recorded between January 2022 and December 2024. Annual contact volumes declined over the study period, from 7,791 in 2022 to 7,438 in 2023 and 7,295 in 2024, representing an overall reduction of 6.4%.

There were multiple channels of contacting the service, but the 3 main channels of communication were examined: calls, texts and email. Calls accounted for the largest proportion of contacts among the three individually examined communication channels.

The number of telephone contacts declined consistently across the study period, from 3,430 in 2022 to 3,172 in 2023 and 2,772 in 2024, representing a reduction of 19.2%. In contrast, text message contacts remained relatively stable, with 1,085, 1,099 and 1,098 contacts recorded in 2022, 2023 and 2024, respectively. Email contacts declined from 1,376 in 2022 to 1,252 in 2023 before remaining relatively unchanged at 1,255 in 2024. The following figures below illustrate these distributions.

Figure 1a. Annual distribution of total service contact, 2022–2024.



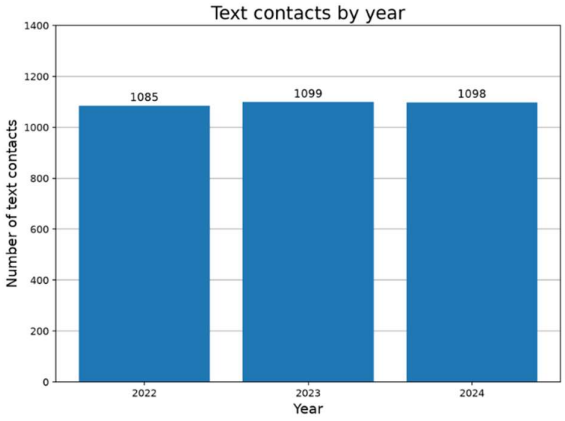


Figure 1b. Annual distribution of service contacts by text contact, 2022–2024.

Figure 1c. Annual distribution of service contacts by call contact, 2022–2024.

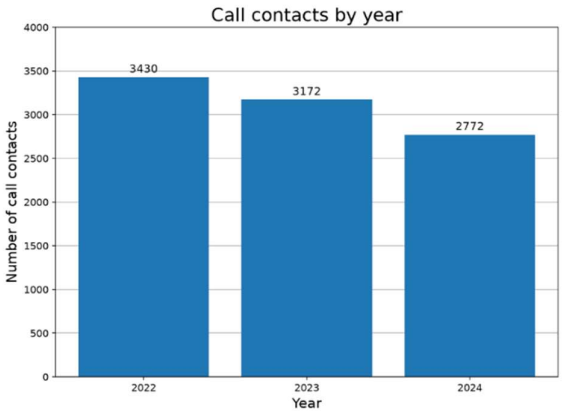


Figure 1d. Annual distribution of service contacts by email contact, 2022–2024.

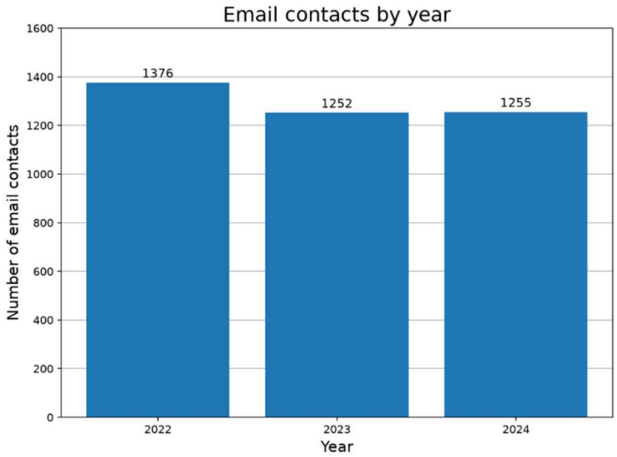


Figure 2a. Monthly trends of total service contacts, 2022–2024.

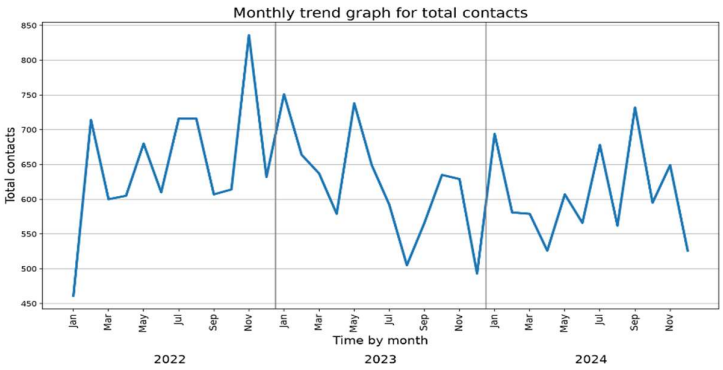


Figure 2b. Monthly trends of service contacts by text, 2022–2024

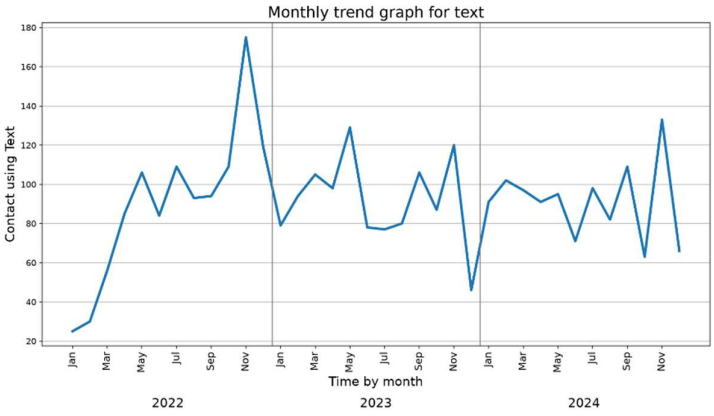


Figure 2c. Monthly trends of service contacts by call contact, 2022–2024

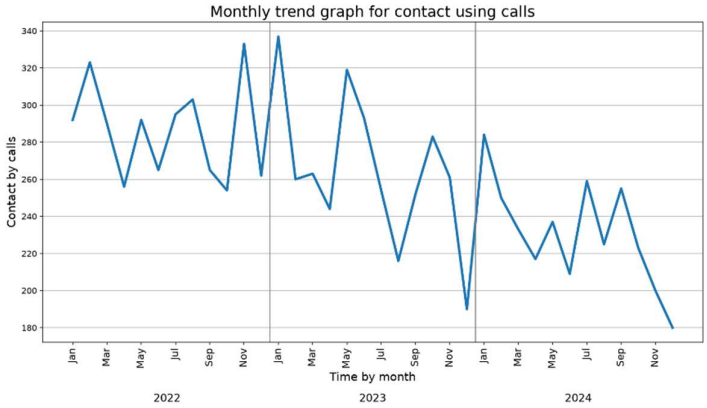
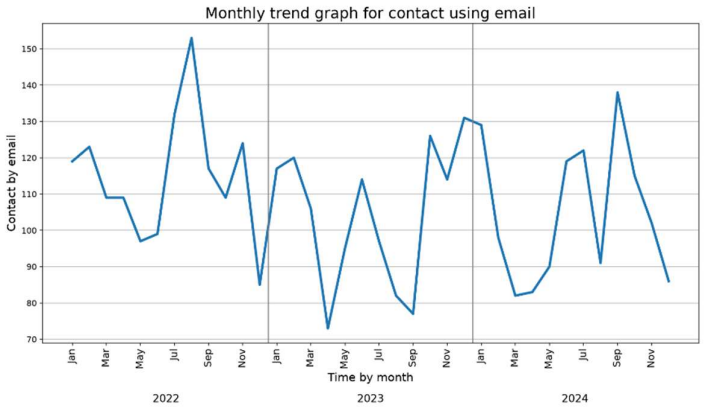


Figure 2b. Monthly trends of service contacts by email, 2022–2024



Examination of monthly contact distributions indicated variation in service activity throughout the calendar year. Overall contact volumes were relatively higher during February, June and November, whereas lower volumes were observed during December and several months in the spring and summer. Text message contacts demonstrated more pronounced monthly variation, with relatively higher average volumes during November and May and lower volumes during January and December. Telephone and email contacts also fluctuated across months. Differences were also evident in contact volumes across weekdays. Overall, service activity was highest on Tuesdays, followed by Mondays, and declined towards the end of the working week. Similar weekday differences were observed for telephone and email contacts, with activity generally concentrated during the earlier part of the working week. Text message contacts demonstrated a less consistent weekday distribution across the three years. Following figures below illustrate these distributions.

Figure 3a. Weekday average distribution of total service contacts, 2022–2024.

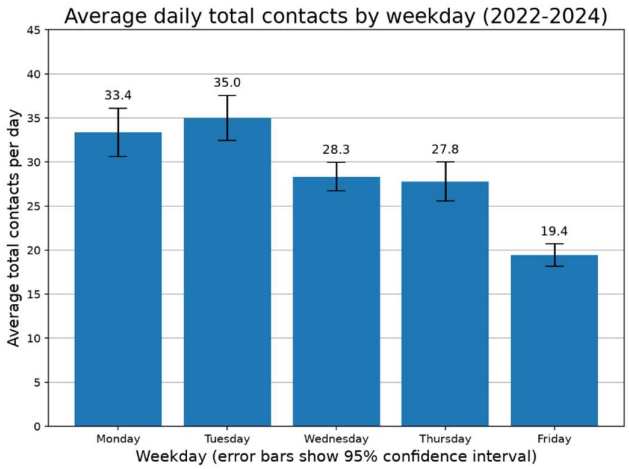


Figure 3b. Weekday average distribution of text service contacts, 2022–2024.

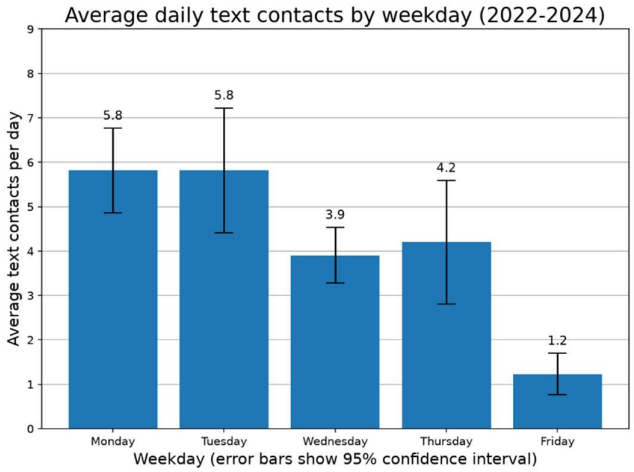


Figure 3c. Weekday average distribution of calls, 2022–2024.

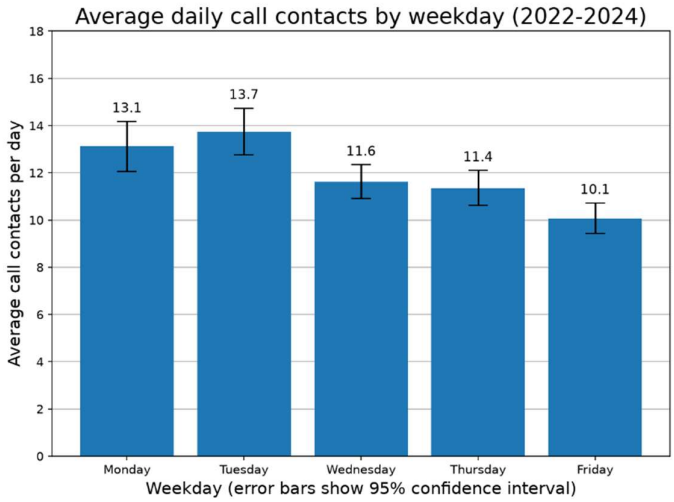
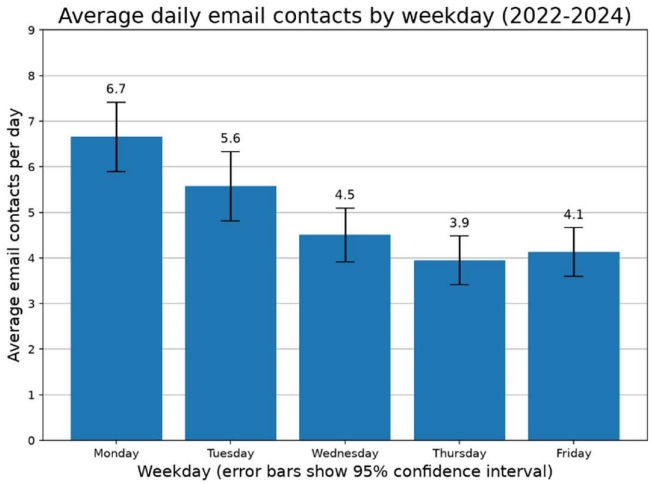


Figure 3d. Weekday average distribution of emails, 2022–2024.



Temporal trends and seasonality relating to contacts to Men's Aid Ireland

Across the three-year period, overall service contacts showed fluctuations over time, with some recurring increases and decreases, although the timing and size of these peaks were not consistent from year to year. The modest decline in annual contacts should be interpreted cautiously, as the first year of the study coincided with the final phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have influenced help-seeking patterns. Weekly contact numbers tended to stay high or low for several weeks in a row, showing that service activity was influenced by recent patterns rather than by a clear seasonal trend. No evidence of annual seasonality was identified.

However, the daily analysis showed a clear weekly pattern, with statistically significant peaks occurring every five working days (lags 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 30) ($r \approx 0.20$-0.26), all above the 95% confidence threshold, indicating that contact volumes tended to repeat from one working week to the next. This suggests that demand for the service was influenced more by regular weekday routines than by longer-term seasonal factors.

Daily text message contacts showed a clear weekly pattern. Statistically significant increases in correlational relationships were found at regular five-day intervals, indicating that text message contact volumes tended to repeat from one working week to the next. In contrast, the weekly and monthly analyses did not identify any consistent seasonal trends, and there was no evidence of an annual cycle in text message contact volumes.

Telephone call volumes showed some short-term patterns, with a few statistically significant correlations found at specific time points in the daily, weekly, and monthly analyses. However, these patterns were irregular and did not occur at consistent intervals. Overall, there was no clear evidence that telephone call contacts followed a weekly, monthly, or annual seasonal pattern.

Email contact volumes declined between 2022 and 2023 before remaining relatively stable in 2024. The analyses showed predominantly weak correlations, with no consistent peaks at

regularly repeating intervals. Overall, no clear evidence of weekly or annual seasonality was identified in email contact volumes.

The weekly and monthly analyses showed that recorded abuse counts were often similar from one period to the next, with positive correlations at shorter time intervals. However, there was no evidence of a repeating annual pattern, as correlations at one year (weekly lag 52: r = 0.059; monthly lag 12: r = −0.022) and two years (monthly lag 24: r = −0.134) were weak.

Overall, the findings suggest some weekly patterns (with Tuesday having the highest average number of recorded abuse incidents at 21.8), but no clear evidence of annual seasonality was identified. Below contains a summary of the findings.

Summary of seasonality findings

Table 1: Summary of seasonality findings

Contact category	Main temporal findings	Evidence of seasonality
Total contacts	Sustained weekly autocorrelation and recurring fluctuations	Suggests presence of weekly seasonality
Text messages	Monthly fluctuations and isolated weekly autocorrelation peaks	Suggests presence of weekly seasonality
Telephone calls	Declining annual trend; weak periodic autocorrelation	No clear evidence
Emails	Variable monthly volumes; weak periodic autocorrelation	No clear evidence
Total recorded abuse counts	Widespread positive daily autocorrelation, with recurring local peaks at lags 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30	Suggests presence of weekly seasonality

Across the four contact categories, total contacts and text messages demonstrated evidence consistent with weekly seasonality, characterised by statistically significant positive autocorrelations at recurring five-working-day intervals. In contrast, telephone calls and emails did not exhibit consistent seasonal patterns. No clear evidence of annual seasonality was identified across any of the contact categories.

Descriptive overview of service contacts

The dataset comprised 21,298 contact records received through Men's Aid's Call Help service. One in seven contacts were anonymous (n=2,927, 13.7%), indicating that although most contacts involved the disclosure of identifying information, anonymity remained an important feature of engagement with the service. Note that this section relates to service

contacts and not individuals. The table below provides an overall view of all contact data with further discussion regarding specific aspects following.

Table 2: Demographic and contact characteristics (n=21,928)

Characteristic	Category	N	%
Anonymity status	Non-anonymous	18,371	86.3
	Anonymous[1]	2,927	13.7
Living arrangements	Not living together	5,527	53.4
	Living together	4,830	46.6
Marital status	Not married	4,597	46.4
	Married	5,310	53.6
Gender of alleged perpetrator	Female	6,749	90.4
	Male	608	8.1
	Both male and female	110	1.5
Relationship with alleged perpetrator	Child (son or daughter)	165	1.8
	Other	537	5.9
	Family relative	632	7.0
	Ex-partner	4,466	49.4
	Current partner	3,247	35.9
Identity of person making contact	Self	14,742	78.5
	Family member	1,304	6.9
	Societal support (social worker/Garda)	295	1.6
	Other	2,443	13.0
Information about children	Not recorded	16,105	75.6
	Recorded	5,193	24.4
Age group	Under 40 years	1,946	25.0
	40–60 years	4,624	59.4
	60 years and older	1,214	15.6

Note. Percentages are valid percentages, excluding missing values for each variable. Valid N: anonymity 21,298; living arrangements 10,357; marital status 9,907; perpetrator gender 7,467; relationship 9,047; caller identity 18,784; children information 21,298; age 7,784. Numbers in variables may not always add up to N=21,298 due to missing data.

Living arrangements

Information on living arrangements was available for 10,357 contacts, representing 48.6% of the dataset. Among contacts with available information, 5,527 (53.4%) indicated that the individual experiencing abuse was not living with their partner, while 4,830 (46.6%) indicated that they were living together. The slightly higher proportion of contacts involving individuals who were not living with their partner suggests that requests for assistance were not confined to circumstances in which the individuals concerned shared a household. Information on living arrangements was unavailable or not disclosed in case of 10,941 contacts (51.4%). This may be due to the status of the contact (e.g. email/follow up call/text message) where living arrangements are not usually disclosed.

Marital status

[1] We undertook an analysis of the anonymous cohort also which will be published at a later date.

Marital status information was available for 9,907 contacts, accounting for 46.5% of the dataset. Among these, 5,310 (53.6%) indicated that the individual experiencing abuse was married, while 4,597 (46.4%) indicated that they were not married. The findings indicate that the service was accessed in relation to circumstances involving both married and unmarried individuals, with married individuals accounting for a slightly greater proportion of contacts with recorded marital status. Data was unavailable for 53.5% of records. This may be due to the status of the contact (e.g. email/follow up call/text message) where living arrangements are not usually disclosed.

Gender of the alleged perpetrator

Information on the gender of the alleged perpetrator was available for 7,467 (35.1%) contacts. Of these, 6,749 (90.4%) identified a female perpetrator, 608 (8.1%) identified a male perpetrator, and 110 (1.5%) identified both male and female perpetrators. The findings demonstrate that female perpetrators accounted for the substantial majority of contacts in which perpetrator gender was recorded.

Identity of the person making contact

Information on caller identity was available for 18,784 (88.2%) contacts. The majority were made directly by the individual seeking assistance for their own circumstances (n = 14,742; 78.5%). Family members accounted for 1,304 contacts (6.9%), while 295 (1.6%) were made by individuals classified as providing societal support, including social workers and members of An Garda Síochána. A further 2,443 contacts (13.0%) were classified under the category of other callers.

Age distribution

Age information was available for 7,784 contacts, representing 36.5% of the dataset. Among contacts with recorded age information, individuals aged 40–60 years constituted the largest group (n = 4,624; 59.4%). Those aged under 40 years accounted for 1,946 contacts (25.0%), while individuals aged 60 years and older accounted for 1,214 contacts (15.6%). The relatively substantial proportion of contacts involving individuals aged 60 years and older is also noteworthy, highlighting the relevance of domestic abuse support services to older men.

Availability of abuse-related information

Information relating to abuse was recorded in 6,226 of the 21,298 contacts, representing 29.2%. The remaining 15,072 contacts (70.8%) did not have abuse-related information recorded under this measure. This may reflect differences in the purpose of the contact, the nature of the interaction, or the information disclosed.

Distribution of specific forms of abuse

Emotional abuse was the most frequently documented form of abuse, recorded in 4,963 contacts (79.7%) among the 6,226 contacts with recorded abuse information. Psychological abuse was the second most frequently recorded category, accounting for 3,757 contacts (60.3%). Physical abuse was recorded in 1,928 contacts (31.0%), indicating that nearly one-third of contacts with available abuse-type information involved documentation of physical violence. Coercive abuse was recorded in 1,440 contacts (23.1%), representing approximately one-quarter contacts included in the analysis. Parental alienation, as classified within the dataset, was recorded in 902 contacts (14.5%), while economic abuse was documented in 788 contacts (12.7%). Second-wave abuse was recorded in 116 contacts (1.9%), sexual abuse in 107 contacts (1.7%), and online abuse in 50 contacts (0.8%). Pet abuse was documented in 17 contacts (0.3%) among the 6,226 contacts included in the abuse analysis.

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that the abuse-related circumstances documented through Men's Aid encompassed a wide range of behaviours, with emotional and psychological abuse particularly prominent. The abuse categories were not mutually exclusive. Consequently, individual contacts could contribute to multiple categories, and the percentages should not be summed.

Number of recorded abuse types

Among the 6,226 contacts with abuse-related information, 1,499 (24.1%) involved one recorded type of abuse, while 4,573 (73.5%) involved between two and four recorded types. A further 154 contacts (2.5%) involved five or more recorded abuse types. The findings indicate that the majority of contacts with abuse-related information involved multiple forms of abuse. This represents an important feature of the circumstances documented through the service, suggesting that abusive experiences were frequently characterised by overlapping behaviours rather than isolated categories of abuse. However, the number of recorded categories should not be interpreted as a direct measure of abuse severity. Different categories may vary substantially in their nature, frequency, duration and impact, and the number of types of abuse documented may also depend on the information disclosed during contact. The table overleaf provides a more detailed overview.

Table 3: Recorded abuse characteristics (N=21,298)

Characteristic	Category	N	%
Availability of abuse-related information	Not recorded	15,072	70.8
	Recorded	6,226	29.2
Number of abuse types recorded	1 type	1,499	24.1
	2–4 types	4,573	73.5
	5 or more types	154	2.5
Emotional abuse	No	1,263	20.3
	Yes	4,963	79.7
Psychological abuse	No	2,469	39.7
	Yes	3,757	60.3
Physical abuse	No	4,298	69.0
	Yes	1,928	31.0
Coercive abuse	No	4,786	76.9
	Yes	1,440	23.1
Economic abuse	No	5,438	87.3
	Yes	788	12.7
Parental alienation	No	5,324	85.5
	Yes	902	14.5
Second-wave abuse	No	6,110	98.1
	Yes	116	1.9
Sexual abuse	No	6,119	98.3
	Yes	107	1.7
Online abuse	No	6,176	99.2
	Yes	50	0.8
Pet abuse	No	6,209	99.7
	Yes	17	0.3

Note. Percentages for individual abuse types and the number of abuse types are based on the 6,226 contacts with recorded abuse-related information. Abuse categories are not mutually exclusive. Absence of recorded abuse information should not be interpreted as absence of abuse. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Numbers in variables may not always add up to N=21,298 due to missing data.

Quantitative analysis 2: Types of abuse reported at an individual (client) level to Men's Aid Ireland

Methodology and data source

This analysis was undertaken at the individual victim (client) level to examine the forms of domestic abuse documented and the frequency with which these forms of abuse were recorded across service contacts. Individual service contacts belonging to the same victim were identified and linked using personal identifiers, including full name, age and county of residence. These linked contacts were consolidated into a single unique record for each identifiable victim, enabling the analysis of abuse-related information across multiple service contacts. Following record linkage, personal identifiers were replaced with unique identification codes to protect individual confidentiality and ensure that subsequent analyses were conducted using de-identified records.

Three complementary analytical approaches were employed. The first examined associations between victim characteristics and the documentation of individual forms of abuse. The second investigated factors associated with repeated recordings of the same abuse category among victims for whom that form of abuse had been documented at least once. The third analysis investigated association between victim characteristics and total types of abuse recorded by each victim.

Unlike contact-level analyses, each record in this analysis represented an individual victim, allowing abuse-related information to be examined across multiple contacts associated with the same person. Several kinds of statistical analysis was performed (Descriptive statistical analysis, Bivariate statistical analysis, Multivariable statistical analysis, and Multivariable binary logistic regression, Multivariable multinomial logistic regression analysis). Further detail regarding the particularities of these tests are available upon request.

Study population and sample selection

The original dataset comprised 4,352 individual victim records. Of these, 143 records (3.3%) were excluded because they contained no substantive information, leaving 4,209 records (96.7%). The analysis was subsequently restricted to records containing information on the types of abuse documented, resulting in a final analytical cohort of 2,596 individual victims, representing 59.7% of the original dataset.

The same analytical cohort was used for both analyses. However, the eligible sample varied according to the outcome examined. Analyses of whether a particular form of abuse was recorded included victims with available abuse-related information, irrespective of whether that specific abuse category had been documented. In contrast, analyses of repeated abuse recordings were restricted separately for each abuse category to victims with at least one

recording of that form of abuse. The availability of information varied across individual victim records.

Study variables

The explanatory variables included the presence of children, living arrangements, marital status and the number of contacts made with the service. The presence of children distinguished between victims who reported having children and those who did not. Living arrangements were categorised as not living together, living together, or moving in and out. Marital status distinguished between victims who had never married and those who were currently or previously married. The number of service contacts was categorised as one, two to five, or six or more contacts.

Nine categories of recorded abuse were examined: emotional, psychological, physical, coercive, economic, sexual, online and second-wave abuse and parental alienation. These categories were not mutually exclusive, allowing multiple forms of abuse to be documented for the same individual victim.

Three abuse-related outcomes were examined. The first was whether each individual form of abuse had been recorded for a victim. The second concerned total types of abuse recorded. And the third examined the frequency of documentation of each abuse category, distinguishing between abuse recorded once and abuse recorded more than once. For the third outcome, victims with no recording of the respective abuse category were excluded from that category-specific analysis.

Characteristics of clients who experienced DVA

Among the 2,596 victims included in the analysis, 1,850 (71.3%) reported having children, while 746 (28.7%) did not report having children. Information on living arrangements was available for 2,524 victims (97.2%). Among those with valid information, 1,155 (45.8%) were not living together, while 989 (39.2%) were living together. A further 380 (15.1%) were classified under moving in and out. Information on living arrangements was unavailable for 72 victims (2.8%). Information about marital status was recorded for 2,452 victims (94.5%). Of these, 1,456 (59.4%) were currently or previously married, while 996 (40.6%) had never married. Marital status information was unavailable for 144 victims (5.5%). 617 (23.8%) had made a single contact with the service, while 1,251 (48.2%) had made between two and five contacts. The remaining 728 victims (28.0%) had made six or more contacts. Thus, more than three-quarters of victims (76.2%) had made multiple contacts with the service.

Descriptive characteristics of types of DVA

Among the 2,596 victims with available abuse information, emotional abuse was the most frequently recorded category, affecting 2,249 victims (86.6%), followed by psychological abuse, recorded for 1,854 victims (71.4%). Physical abuse was documented for 1,015 victims (39.1%), while coercive abuse was identified in 803 victims (30.9%). Parental alienation and economic abuse were recorded at similar frequencies, affecting 511 (19.7%) and 510

(19.6%) victims, respectively. Less frequently documented categories included second-wave abuse, recorded for 89 victims (3.4%), sexual abuse for 52 victims (2.0%), online abuse for 39 victims (1.5%), and pet abuse for eight victims (0.3%). These findings indicate that emotional and psychological abuse were the predominant forms of abuse documented among individual victims. Physical and coercive abuse were also relatively common, while other categories were recorded less frequently. The abuse categories were not mutually exclusive, meaning that individual victims could have experienced multiple forms of abuse. Bivariate analyses were conducted to examine associations between individual abuse categories and four victim characteristics: whether children were reported, living arrangements, marital status, and the number of contacts made with the service.

Children, DVA and Fatherhood

Information regarding presence of children was significantly associated with several recorded abuse categories. Emotional abuse was documented more frequently among victims who reported having children (1,652; 89.3%) than among those who did not (597; 80.0%; $p < .001$). Second-wave abuse was similarly more common among victims reporting children (73; 3.9%) versus those who did not (16; 2.1%; $p = .022$). Conversely, sexual abuse was more frequently documented among victims who did not report having children (30; 4.0%) than among those who did (22; 1.2%; $p < .001$).

Living arrangements

Living arrangements were significantly associated with multiple forms of abuse. Emotional abuse was recorded for 941 (81.5%) victims not living together, 905 (91.5%) of those living together, and 361 (95.0%) of those classified as moving in and out ($p < .001$). A similar pattern was observed for psychological abuse (765; 66.2%, 736; 74.4%, and 319; 83.9%, respectively; $p < .001$) and physical abuse (380; 32.9%, 424; 42.9%, and 188; 49.5%, respectively; $p < .001$). Economic abuse was documented in 197 (17.1%) victims not living together, 186 (18.8%) of those living together, and 117 (30.8%) of those classified as moving in and out ($p < .001$). In contrast, parental alienation was substantially more frequently recorded among victims not living together (345; 29.9%) than among those living together (59; 6.0%), while 103 (27.1%) victims classified under both arrangements had this form of abuse recorded ($p < .001$). Sexual abuse was recorded in 31 (2.7%), 11 (1.1%), and 4 (1.1%) victims across these respective living-arrangement categories ($p = .012$). Online abuse also differed significantly, affecting 28 (2.4%), 5 (0.5%), and 6 (1.6%) victims, respectively ($p = .002$).

Marital status

Marital status was associated with differences in the documentation of several abuse categories. Emotional abuse was more frequently recorded among victims who were currently or previously married (1,323; 90.9%) than among those who had never married (836; 83.9%; $p < .001$). Sexual abuse was more frequently recorded among victims who had never married (23; 2.3%) than among those who were currently or previously married (19;

1.3%; p = .003). Online abuse also showed a difference, with corresponding proportions of 24 (2.4%) and 15 (1.0%) (p = .007) respectively.

Number of contacts

The number of contacts made with the service was significantly associated with several forms of abuse, with higher proportions generally observed among victims who had made repeated contacts. Emotional abuse increased from 483 (78.3%) among victims with one contact to 1,085 (86.7%) among those with two to five contacts and 681 (93.5%) among those with six or more contacts (p < .001). Psychological abuse followed a similar pattern, increasing from 365 (59.2%) to 891 (71.2%) and 598 (82.1%), respectively (p < .001). Physical abuse was recorded in 198 (32.1%), 472 (37.7%), and 345 (47.4%) victims across the three contact categories (p < .001). The difference was particularly pronounced for coercive abuse, which was documented in 101 (16.4%) victims with one contact, 344 (27.5%) of those with two to five contacts, and 358 (49.2%) of those with six or more contacts (p < .001). Economic abuse also increased across contact categories (76; 12.3%, 230; 18.4%, and 204; 28.0%; p < .001), as did parental alienation (77; 12.5%, 220; 17.6%, and 214; 29.4%; p < .001). These findings indicate that victims with more recorded contacts generally had a higher proportion of documented abuse categories. However, these associations do not establish whether repeated contacts reflected greater complexity of abuse, increased opportunities for disclosure, or other factors.

Odds associated with victim characteristics and forms of abuse

Multivariable binary logistic regression analyses were conducted to examine the independent associations between victim characteristics and individual forms of abuse. Separate models were estimated for each abuse category, adjusting for the presence of children, living arrangements, number of contacts, and marital status. For parental alienation, the model excluded the children variable. Statistically significant findings are presented below in simpler format (bullet point) to aid understanding.

Emotional abuse

- Victims who reported having children had 1.669 times higher odds of emotional abuse being recorded than those who did not report children.
- Compared with victims with one contact, those with two to five contacts had 1.739 times higher odds of emotional abuse, while those with six or more contacts had more than three times the odds of emotional abuse.

Psychological abuse

- Victims living together had 1.388 times higher odds of psychological abuse being recorded than those not living together
- The number of contacts was also associated with psychological abuse. Compared with victims with one contact, those with two to five contacts had 1.682 times higher

odds of facing psychological abuse, while those with six or more contacts had more than twice the odds.

- Victims who were currently or previously married also had 1.270 times of psychological abuse being recorded than those who had never married.

Physical abuse

- Victims who reported having children had 0.782 times lower odds of physical abuse being recorded than those who did not report children.
- Compared with victims not living together, those living together had 1.6 times higher odds of physical abuse as did those classified under both living arrangements.
- The number of contacts was also associated with physical abuse. Compared with victims with one contact, those with two to five contacts had 1.324 times higher odds, while those with six or more contacts had nearly twice the odds of experiencing physical abuse.

Coercive abuse

- Compared with victims not living together, those classified under moving in and out had 1.359 times higher odds of coercive abuse being recorded.
- The number of contacts was also strongly associated with coercive abuse. Compared with victims with one contact, those with two to five contacts had more than twice the odds, while those with six or more contacts had more than five times the odds of coercive abuse being recorded (OR 5.410).

Economic abuse

- Compared with victims not living together, those classified under both living arrangements had 1.347 times higher odds of economic abuse being recorded.
- The number of contacts was also associated with economic abuse. Compared with victims with one contact, those with two to five contacts had 1.448 times higher odds, while those with six or more contacts had more than twice the odds
- Victims who were currently or previously married also had 1.746 times higher odds of economic abuse being recorded than those who had never married.

Parental alienation

- Compared with victims not living together, those living together had significantly lower odds (OR=0.147) of parental alienation being recorded, than those classified under both living arrangements.
- The number of contacts was also associated with parental alienation. Compared with victims with one contact, those with two to five contacts had 1.414 times higher odds, while those with six or more contacts had more than twice the odds (OR=2.715) of parental alienation.

Second-wave abuse

- Compared with victims not living together, those living together had significantly lower odds (OR=0.133) of second-wave abuse being recorded.

Sexual abuse

- Victims who reported having children had significantly lower odds (OR=0.313) of sexual abuse being recorded than those who did not report children.
- Compared with victims not living together, those living together also had lower odds (OR=0.402)
- The number of contacts was also associated with sexual abuse. Compared with victims with one contact, those with six or more contacts had almost three times higher odds (OR=2.785) of sexual abuse being recorded.

Online abuse

- Compared with victims not living together, those living together had significantly lower odds (OR=0.226) of online abuse being recorded.

Odds Associated with frequency of DVA types reported

Five or more abuse types versus one abuse type

- Reporting children was associated with 2.309 times higher odds of having five or more abuse types recorded
- Compared with those not living together, victims moving in and out had 3.672 times higher odds of having five or more abuse types recorded.
- The number of service contacts was strongly associated with reporting different types of abuse. Compared with those making a single contact, those making 2-5 contacts had 8 times higher odds with even higher odds observed with those making six or more contacts.

Two to four abuse types versus one abuse type

- Reporting children was associated with 1.324 times higher odds of having two to four abuse types recorded.
- Compared with those not living together, higher odds to report 2-4 types of abuses were observed among victims who were moving in and out (OR=2.220).
- Victims with two to five contacts had 1.834 times more odds of 2-4 abuse types.
- Those with six or more contacts had over three times the odds of 2-4 abuse types than those with a single contact.

Overall, the number of service contacts was strongly associated with the number of recorded abuse types, particularly for the five-or-more category.

Analysis of Frequency of Recorded Abuse Among Individual Victims

Table 4: Overview of the frequency of recorded abuse by category

Abuse category	Once, n (%)	More than once, n (%)	Model N
Emotional	1,239 (57.5)	914 (42.5)	2,153
Psychological	1,151 (64.7)	627 (35.3)	1,778
Physical	641 (66.6)	321 (33.4)	962
Coercive	533 (70.1)	227 (29.9)	760
Economic	368 (75.1)	122 (24.9)	490
Parental alienation	365 (73.3)	133 (26.7)	498

Percentages are calculated within the model-included sample for each abuse category. Categories may overlap.

Among the less frequently documented abuse categories, second-wave abuse was recorded once for 77 victims (86.5%) and more than once for 12 (13.5%), sexual abuse for 41 (78.8%) and 11 (21.2%), online abuse for 34 (87.2%) and five (12.8%), and pet abuse for seven (87.5%) and one (12.5%), respectively.

Overall Conclusions

The analysis of repeated abuse recordings provides important insight into the persistence and complexity of male victims' experiences of domestic violence and abuse. While most abuse categories were recorded only once for the majority of victims, a substantial proportion experienced repeated recordings of emotional, psychological, physical, coercive, and parental-alienation abuse, indicating that these forms of victimisation often persist over time rather than occurring as isolated incidents.

The presence of children emerged as one of the most consistent factors associated with repeated abuse. Victims who reported having children were significantly more likely to have multiple recordings of emotional, psychological, physical, and coercive abuse than those without children. These findings suggest that children may increase opportunities for ongoing contact between victims and perpetrators, allowing abusive behaviours to continue or re-emerge over extended periods. This pattern also supports qualitative evidence highlighting the role of parenting responsibilities, child-contact arrangements, and family relationships in maintaining coercive control after relationship conflict or separation.

Living arrangements were also associated with the recurrence of abuse. Victims who remained in shared or fluctuating living situations with the perpetrator generally experienced higher levels of repeated abuse, reflecting the increased opportunities for ongoing conflict, monitoring, and control that accompany continued contact. In contrast, forms of abuse associated with post-separation dynamics were more evident among those not living together.

Marital status demonstrated weaker but still meaningful associations with repeated abuse experiences. The findings suggest that victims who were currently or previously married may experience patterns of abuse that are more persistent, potentially reflecting the greater financial, emotional, and familial interdependence often found in longer-term relationships.

Overall, the findings indicate that repeated recordings of abuse are not randomly distributed across victims but are concentrated among those facing more complex personal and family circumstances. In particular, the presence of children appears to be a key marker of sustained and recurring abuse. The results highlight the importance of recognising domestic abuse as a dynamic and ongoing process rather than a single event, with many victims experiencing repeated patterns of victimisation that require ongoing support and intervention. These findings further suggest that services working with male victims should pay particular attention to cases involving children and continuing contact with perpetrators, as these circumstances appear to be associated with more persistent and multifaceted abuse experiences.

Findings: Qualitative analysis

Figure 4: Word cloud representing the words used by participants in telling their life stories



Methodology

The MENCALLTIME Study employed a qualitative narrative research design to explore participants' experiences of domestic abuse and the life events that shaped those experiences. Narrative inquiry was selected because it enables individuals to describe and make sense of significant events in their own words, providing rich, contextualised accounts of their lived experiences. This approach allowed participants to construct and share personal stories, offering insight into the meanings they attached to their experiences and the impact of abuse on their lives.

Participants

Nine men aged 18 years and older who were attending Men's Aid counselling services voluntarily participated in the study. Participants were recruited through the service and provided informed consent prior to participation. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face at a location agreed with the participant or online using Microsoft Teams. Interview duration ranged from 23 minutes to 2 hours and 33 minutes, with a mean duration of 1 hour and 16 minutes. This flexibility in interview format enabled participation while accommodating individual preferences and circumstances.

Data collection and Analysis

Data were collected through in-depth narrative interviews, during which participants were invited to tell their stories with minimal interruption. Interviews began with a broad, open-ended question and were guided by participants' accounts, with follow-up prompts used only to clarify or further explore issues raised by participants (see Appendix 1).

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2022). The transcriptions were uploaded to NVivo version 14 for analysis (Lumivero. 2025). Analysis involved repeated reading of transcripts to achieve familiarity with the data, followed by the generation of initial codes, the identification of patterns across narratives, and the development, review, and refinement of themes. A deductive approach was adopted, whereby the analysis was guided by concepts and issues identified in the existing literature on domestic abuse. The data were examined in relation to these predetermined areas of interest while remaining attentive to variations in participants' experiences. This approach facilitated the identification of patterns across accounts while preserving the context and complexity of individual narratives.

The combination of narrative inquiry and thematic analysis facilitated an understanding of both the unique lived experiences of participants and the broader patterns characterising men's experiences of domestic abuse.

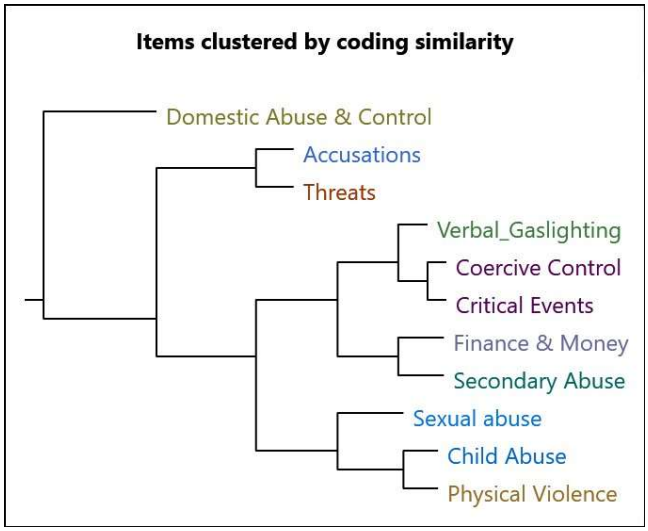
The findings are organised around three key areas: participants' experiences of domestic abuse, the legal and administrative challenges they faced, and the consequences of abuse and relationship breakdown for their relationships with their children and broader family networks. The analysis also explores the critical incidents and turning points that shaped participants' lives and acted as catalysts in their decision to seek help and support.

The Nature of the Abuse

Participant narratives told stories of constant verbal abuse, threats, and physical violence however, coercive control was the dominant theme identified in the data, accounting for the largest volume with 89 different quotations (See Figure 6 below) Furthermore, coercive control often included other form of abuse. Participants described coercive control as a pervasive pattern of domination that extended across finances, parenting, social

relationships, movement, decision-making, and daily life. Many reported being gradually isolated from family and friends, monitored, deprived of autonomy, and controlled through threats involving their children.

Figure 5: DVA items clustered by NVIVO coding similarity



Financial Control

Several participants described extensive financial abuse.

> *"Controlled financially controlled over who I can see, what I can do, what I can say"…""She doesn't let me have access on my stuff. She's after changing passwords, PIN numbers on the cards, passwords on my e-mail, absolutely everything."* (Participant 1)

> *I had no access to my wages she had my bank cards I was given 40 euro a week to spend she just had complete control of everything, and It was just after Christmas, and Christmas was horrendous."* (Participant 4*)*

> *"But I was still…the sole financial provider for her, I was paying…her mom to clean the (house). I was like, you know, essentially being taken to the cleaners by her and her mom to pay for absolutely everything."* (Participant 7)

> *"I used to work like six days a week and hand up every penny"… "I took home 600 euro I used to hand her up 550 euro I used to keep a tenner for a bottle of wine on a Saturday night, me lotto in work with the lads, and petrol for the car."* (Participant 9).

Verbal abuse & Gaslighting

Gaslighting was particularly evident across participants' accounts through persistent criticism, rewriting of personal and family histories, undermining of parental competence, and repeated attempts to make men question their own memories, perceptions, and self-worth.

> *"I mean not only verbal violence and abusive language, physical violence as well"* (Participant 1)

> *"These sort of things were happening, these sort of barbed words and stuff"…"She would constantly bring up things from the past, like just discussions or arguments we had in the past, and so many things I wouldn't even remember".* (Participant 2)

> *"Like all along for the previous two years, XXXX would never let me do normal stuff in front of the kids, she'd belittle me and undermine me and dismiss me and try and make me look like dirt in front of the kids".* (Participant 5)

> *"But it wasn't until February 2021 where I was able to, you know, and at this stage I didn't know, am I a bad man? She tells me I'm bad man, maybe I am a bad man, I need to, I need support. And I was singled out; I was completely on my own".* (Participant 6)

> *"Before I started to do that, you'd be second guessing yourself because if someone's constantly telling you you're bad. You don't do this. You're not good with the kids".* (Participant 7)

> *"Everything just constantly degrading you, demeaning it. And then of course I always start thinking, you know, well maybe I am too old, maybe I am too fat".* (Participant 9)

Isolation from Family and Friends

Social isolation emerged as a key component of coercive control, with participants describing efforts to restrict or undermine their relationships with family and friends.

> Participant 1 shared *"And then finally came to the stage where I had to talk to my mom and my dad as well, to tell them too, because they were worried, why can they not see the child*" (Participant 1)

> For participant 4 his social isolation extended both to his family and his friends. *"I was afraid to go out and socialise with people, because she was very, very possessive, like mad jealous."* (Participant 4)

"I lost every single friendship"…" "One by one, isolated me from them as well, so I was left pretty much with... absolutely no one." (Participant 4)

"Out of nowhere, there was a huge distaste and dislike for my mum because my mum was maybe a bit more vocal about, she seen what was going on" (Participant 4)

" At this stage now, I probably hadn't seen my parents for the guts of a year or spoken to them"…" "My parents were out of the picture." (Participant 4)

Participant 5 shared his experiences about his partners problems with his parents.
"But come...2020, XXXX was now at this point, rowing against my family or my mother and father especially and looking for trouble where there wasn't." (Participant 5)

"And at this point, things weren't great between my family or XXXX and my parents, and I had decided that maybe creating a wee bit of distance between my mother and XXXX would be a healthy thing" (Participant 5)

"She thought she'd represented my mother as a devil incarnate. She wanted away from that, and being away from that, everyone was going to be fine in her world". (Participant 5)

Participant 6 shared his experience
"They (parents) weren't allowed to come and visit our house. I wasn't allowed to take the children back to the UK." (Participant 6)

Participant 7 also shared similar experiences
""My mum wasn't allowed in the house"…."So my mum went to the shop for us, I had to open the door and like turn her away to see her grandkids" (Participant 7)
"It's funny, my mum only said to me today, like, she said, she never held her granddaughter, like my daughter, XXXX never let her hold her, until she was like, six, she hadn't even had a hug off her" (Participant 7)

"The impact like was not just on me, it was on like my family, do you know what I mean." (Participant 7)

Control Through Children

Many participants reported that children were used as a means of maintaining control.

> Participant 1 described being denied access to his child unless financial demands were met:
> *"She demanded the money. She's like, you want to see the child? Yeah, I'll meet you over in the shopping centre. I need this, And then I'll bring the kid with me. And every time I was going there waiting and she would never show up".* (Participant 1)

Many other participants shared their experiences of controlling behaviour by their partners:

> *"And then my kids stopped wanting to see me, wanting to come with me"* (Participant 4)

> *"And my parents come over to the house in February time to see XXXX and XXXX, because other than that, they would never have seen the kids. They were seeing the kids every two or three months, at best, for a few minutes"* (Participant 5).

> *"I wasn't allowed to cook for myself in the house, wasn't allowed to cook for the children."* (Participant 6)
>
> *"For example, if I were to say to my youngest, you know, would you like to go to the park? He'd say, have you asked mum? If I put some toast on downstairs, they'd get worried and say, you're not allowed to do that you have to wait till mum does that". (Participant 6)*

> *"Well, actually, you know, when I think about it, so I was never allowed to bring the kids anywhere and my mom wasn't allowed in the house. And her mom had a key to my house"* (Participant 7)
>
> *"I'd say she was about 5 and I had her sitting on me lap and I said, what's wrong with you, chicken. And she started crying… She says, mommy said, she said that if I go with you, I won't be able to go out with my friends or something like that. Such a cruel and horrible thing to a poor little kid"* (Participant 9)

> *"It was like, it was her home and then her kids, she was turning her, especially the eldest fella, turning him against me, sort of demeaning me in front of him."* (Participant 9)

Threats & Psychological Manipulation.

Several participants described ongoing threats, intimidation, and psychological coercion that created fear, uncertainty, and emotional distress.

Participant 6 recounted a situation in which his partner sought a medical opinion about his mental health without his involvement and subsequently informed him that:

"Me and the GP have diagnosed you with split personality disorder" (Participant 6)

As a result, he pursued a costly psychiatric assessment. Following the evaluation, he reported that the psychiatrist concluded:

*"I see no reason for any further psychiatric treatment." (*Participant 6)

Despite this professional assessment, Participant 6 described continued pressure from his partner, recalling:

"*She pinned me up against the wall in the kitchen and she said, if you don't go back, and appeal for another one [opinion]... I'm leaving."* (Participant 6)

Participant 2 described experiencing repeated threats and intimidation that generated significant psychological stress and uncertainty. He recalled:

“She was like, I have something planned for you, don't you worry about that now and I tell you, if I were you, I'd go now if I were you, and I was like, what are you on about, and she was like, don't you worry you'll find out? I had no idea” (Participant 2)

He also described incidents that conveyed a persistent message that he was unwelcome in his own home.

“She'd get up some morning and then the door would kick open, and she would kick it open and she was just standing there with her kind of robe on her, and she'd be like, You know, are you still here?” (Participant 2)

Reflecting on the cumulative impact of these behaviours, he explained:
“So, this goes on anyway, and this is the sort of stuff, the sort of more psychological. She knew I was stressed out at work” (Participant 2)

“My wife was amping up her pressure now as well. So a lot of my damage was emotional distress” (Participant 2)

Participant 9 described living in a state of fear, particularly when returning home from work:
“ Your stress level would come up and I would park the car and you could hear her screaming and shouting the whole lot and I'd be terrified going in the door, putting the key in the door, afraid of her.” (Participant 9)

Similarly, Participant 1 explained how fear shaped his daily routine and led him to avoid returning home:

“Back then I became a workaholic. I was afraid to go home. I was staying in work until all hours at night until I knew that she was going to bed”. (Participant 1)

> Participant 4 also reflected on the profound emotional impact of living with sustained intimidation and fear. He described feeling isolated and unable to disclose his experiences to others:
>
> *"I was so ******* unhappy, but I didn't feel that I could open up to anyone because I thought that everyone would maybe judge or laugh or like how could someone get themselves into such a position"…"But yeah, looking back on it, I was ******* petrified for so many years".* (Participant 4)

Collectively, these accounts illustrate how threats, intimidation, and psychological coercion created an environment of fear and uncertainty. Participants described feeling constantly on edge, experiencing significant emotional distress, altering their routines to avoid conflict, and living with a persistent sense of apprehension within their own homes.

Across participants' accounts, coercive control emerged as a pervasive and enduring pattern of abuse designed to dominate, intimidate, and restrict personal freedom. Participants described experiencing financial abuse, social isolation, surveillance, emotional manipulation, threats, and the use of children as a means of maintaining control. Many reported being gradually separated from friends, family, and support networks, leaving them with "absolutely no one" to turn to. Control extended to finances, daily activities, social interactions, and parenting, with some participants describing their partners as having "complete control" over their lives. The cumulative impact was profound, resulting in feelings of fear, helplessness, shame, emotional exhaustion, and a significant loss of confidence, autonomy, and personal identity.

Patrick's Story: Living with Coercive Control

A feature of Patrick's story was the age gap between himself and his partner. Patrick was a young man when the relationship began, while his partner was considerably older and had substantially more life experience. Looking back, he felt this difference created an imbalance in the relationship from the outset. As a younger man, he described being inexperienced, impressionable, and eager to help, making it difficult for him to recognise warning signs or challenge behaviours that gradually became controlling.

Over time, Patrick found himself increasingly drawn into a relationship characterised by emotional manipulation, fear, and dependency. He recalled feeling a strong sense of responsibility for his partner and her wellbeing, often placing her needs ahead of his own. What initially appeared to be care and concern gradually developed into a situation where he felt trapped by guilt and obligation. As the years passed, he became increasingly afraid of upsetting her and described living in a near-constant state of anxiety. Rather than feeling like an equal partner, he felt intimidated, controlled, and, in his own words, "petrified" for much of the relationship.

One of the most damaging aspects of the abuse was the gradual erosion of his social connections. Patrick spoke of how relationships with friends, family members, and sporting teammates disappeared over the years. Activities that once provided enjoyment, support, and a sense of identity became increasingly difficult to maintain. As these connections faded, he became profoundly isolated. The loneliness that followed left him feeling that he had nobody to turn to and reinforced his sense of being trapped within the relationship.

Patrick also experienced significant financial control. Despite working and earning an income, he felt he had little say over financial decisions and was required to account for his spending. This loss of financial independence contributed to a growing sense of powerlessness and dependence. He increasingly felt that important decisions about his own life were no longer his to make.

Alongside this, Patrick described feeling constantly monitored and distrusted. He was frequently questioned about where he had been, who he had spoken to, and how he spent his time. Living under continual suspicion left him feeling emotionally drained and hypervigilant. He became accustomed to anticipating criticism and managing accusations, leaving little room for peace or relaxation.

A recurring emotion throughout his story was shame. Patrick found it difficult to recognise himself as a victim of abuse and felt embarrassed by his experiences. He believed that admitting he was being abused conflicted with social expectations of men as strong, resilient, and capable of protecting themselves. This shame prevented him from seeking support and left him carrying much of his distress alone.

As the years passed, the emotional impact became overwhelming. Patrick described feeling increasingly hopeless, isolated, and defeated. The cumulative effects of fear, loneliness, and control eventually led to thoughts of suicide, as he struggled to see a way forward. He felt stripped of his confidence, independence, and sense of self.

Following separation, his distress continued as conflict involving the children emerged. The loss of important relationships and the ongoing challenges surrounding his children brought intense sadness and grief. Reflecting on his experiences, Patrick's story demonstrates how coercive control can systematically undermine a person's autonomy, identity, and wellbeing. More than any single incident, it was the enduring feelings of fear, isolation, shame, helplessness, and heartbreak that had the deepest and most lasting impact on his life.

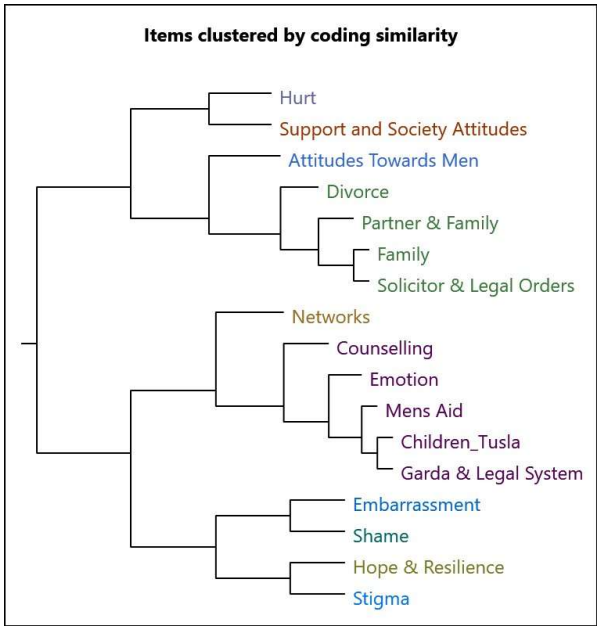
Participants Experiences of the Legal and Family Court System

From the experiences of all the participants' in this study, the legal system was frequently described as an extension of the abuse rather than a source of protection and equitable justice. Following separation, many men became involved in family court proceedings, protection-order applications, Garda investigations, and disputes regarding child access. Participants commonly portrayed these processes as emotionally exhausting, financially costly, and disruptive to their relationships with their children.

A dominant theme was the perception of limited rights as fathers. Participant 1 described family law proceedings as *"a long battle with the legal system"* and felt that *"as a man, as a father, you don't really have much rights and you're limited."* His primary focus became maintaining contact with his child, explaining that he had been *"fighting to at least just to see my child"* while also attempting to address financial difficulties that he believed were being exacerbated through the separation process. *"That financial situation…was getting out of control and was not, I knew that I was right and I'm not doing anything wrong and she's milking everything wherever she can off my back, absolutely everything, just to ruin me".*

Several participants described significant difficulties proving their victimisation. P1 reported collecting extensive evidence, including *"about 200 audio recordings and video recordings,"* but felt unable to effectively use this material within family court proceedings. Reflecting on his situation, he asked, *"How can you prove that you're actually the victim?"* He described feeling demoralised because *"you don't know how you're going to defend yourself."* More broadly, he believed it was *"very hard to prove, to be believed."*

Figure 6: Legal, Family, Emotional and Support Themes Cluster by NVIVO Coding Similarity



Legal orders featured prominently across participants' narratives. Participant 2 (P2) described becoming involved in safety-order proceedings despite having no prior legal experience, recalling, *"I've never been in court in my life."* Faced with legal uncertainty, he stated that he *"stupidly decided to consent to the order"* rather than contest it. Looking back, he believed this contributed to what he described as *"abuse of the legal system to get control of a family house and children."* He later experienced arrest proceedings following

an alleged breach of the order and reported feeling *"completely now, blown away"* by the experience.

Similarly, Participant 3 (P3) described obtaining a protection order after reporting abuse but stated that *"Two days later she got a counter protection order citing rape, child abuse and assault."* He characterised subsequent allegations as devastating, describing one accusation as *"a nuclear strike."* These allegations were accompanied by prolonged legal proceedings that significantly affected his relationship with his children.

A recurring consequence of legal proceedings was the loss or restriction of contact with children. P3 reported that he *"didn't see my kids for five years, even though I was the primary carer."* Participant 6 (P6) described lengthy delays before his case returned to court, explaining that *"it took me until October of the following year, a whole 10 months later, to actually get back into court."* During this period, he remained excluded from normal family life and experienced significant uncertainty regarding child access. Participant 4 (P4) similarly recalled that *"in those six months I barely got to see my daughters."*

Participants also highlighted the substantial financial burden associated with defending themselves. P3 reported, *"I spent over 100,000 euro on my defence,"* while also noting that *"it cost me 5,000 to get the report to go into court with."* Others described spending thousands of euro on solicitors, barristers, assessments, and repeated court appearances in efforts to maintain parental relationships and respond to allegations.

Many participants felt compelled to become experts in their own cases because they perceived existing legal support as insufficient. P1 recalled seeking legal advice only to be told, *"it's not much I can help you with. It's very limited."* As a result, he explained, *"I had to start to sit down, to go to library, to get books, to start to read, to document myself."* He undertook extensive research to ensure that he knew *"what I can do to make sure that I am there in my child's life."*

Overall, participants described the legal system as a prolonged and often adversarial process characterised by allegations, protection orders, custody disputes, delays, and significant financial costs. A common experience across accounts was the feeling of having to fight not only to defend themselves, but also to preserve their identities as fathers and maintain meaningful relationships with their children.

Experiences of Legal Orders, Arrest, and the Family Court System

Participant 2 described his experience of separation as becoming increasingly dominated by legal interventions, which he believed were used to gain control over the family home and access to the children. Reflecting on the progression of events, he stated, *"Basically, what going on here is abuse of the legal system to get control of a family house and children".*

Having no prior experience of the courts, P2 found himself suddenly facing an application for a safety order. He recalled sitting in court feeling overwhelmed and thinking, *"I've never been in court in my life"*. Faced with the possibility of a lengthy court battle, he accepted legal advice and *"stupidly decided to consent to the* (safety*) order",* which remained in place for approximately two years. Although he was advised that he could seek a similar order himself, he chose not to because he did not want to be "putting the fire to the flames." In hindsight, he believed this decision left him vulnerable. *"I know in hindsight, knowing from the experience of people here, that's exactly what I should have done as well".*

The situation escalated when Gardaí unexpectedly entered his home while he was asleep. Waking to voices upstairs, he discovered *"Not one, not two. There's 3 guards coming up the stairs in the house".* They informed him that his wife had reported being locked out. Confused, he replied, *"I'm asleep, does she not have a key?".* When he checked his phone in front of the Gardaí, there were "*No missed calls on the phone, no calls on her at all".* The Gardaí eventually left, but the incident left him distressed and confused. Later that evening he received notification that a complaint had been made against him and was subsequently told, *"We're going to have to arrest you in relation to a possible crime, breach of a safety order".* He described being *"completely now, blown away"* and repeatedly asking himself, *"what is going on here?"* After spending a night in custody and being transported in "the back of a paddy wagon," he became involved in lengthy court proceedings and repeated allegations.

The experience fundamentally altered his trust in institutions. Reflecting on his treatment, he stated, *"You didn't protect me in my greatest hour of need,"* and concluded that he no longer trusted those involved in the justice system, saying, "I don't believe in any of you. I don't want nothing to do with any of the guards." Overall, participant 2 experiences highlights the profound emotional impact of legal orders, arrest, and prolonged family court proceedings, leaving him feeling powerless, disbelieved, and deeply disillusioned with the system.

Accusations as Instruments of Legal and Custody Control

Allegations of abuse were frequently described not as isolated complaints but as strategic accusations deployed during relationship breakdown, custody disputes, and legal proceedings. Participants perceived these allegations as mechanisms to gain advantage in family court, restrict parental access, damage credibility, and strengthen applications for protective orders reflective of the phenomenon of second wave abuse first identified by Corbally (2011).

A prominent pattern involved allegations of **rape, sexual abuse, child sexual abuse, assault, coercive control, domestic abuse, and child neglect** emerging immediately after men sought legal protection, access to their children, or challenged their former partners' actions. Several participants reported explicit threats that accusations would be made if they did not comply with demands. For example, Participant 1 recalled being warned, *"if you*

call the guards, I'm going to tell them you raped me" and believed the recording of this threat protected him from potentially devastating legal consequences. Similarly, Participant 3 reported being told, *"if you don't leave the house, I'm going to say you raped me,"* during divorce proceedings.

Many participants described accusations escalating once legal proceedings commenced. Participant 3 reported that after obtaining a protection order, his former partner secured a counter-order alleging rape and child abuse "*So the rape was alleged to have happened six weeks before the protection order, before I got the protection order. She never told anybody. There was no DNA. Never went to her doctor"…" She then went into TUSLA" and said, I sexually abused my daughter".*

He was subsequently investigated for assaulting his son and later faced allegations of sexually abusing his daughter after being granted court-ordered access. Although the criminal case was ultimately withdrawn, he reflected that *"the damage had been done,"* highlighting how the allegation itself had already disrupted his relationship with his children and delayed proceedings.

Allegations concerning children appeared particularly powerful in restricting paternal contact. Participant 4 described being accused of taking inappropriate photographs of his daughters and distributing them online, allegations that were used to justify preventing further access to the children. Similar experiences were reported by Participant 5, who alleged that his former partner instructed their child to tell teachers that he had been abusive, while simultaneously engaging with TUSLA and other agencies to support what he perceived as a case against him. Several participants believed allegations were repeatedly raised with courts, schools, Gardaí, therapists, and child protection services to strengthen legal claims and influence professional opinion.

Accusations of **coercive control and domestic abuse** were also frequently reported. Participant 6 stated that criminal allegations of coercive control were made after he sought a protection order. Participant 7 described being portrayed in court and his community as financially abusive and controlling, with the allegations forming part of both protection-order applications and divorce proceedings. He also reported further claims that he was tracking and monitoring his former partner through electronic devices.

A recurring feature across narratives was second wave abuse in the form of the use of third parties and institutions to reinforce claims. Participants reported allegations being communicated to Gardaí, TUSLA, schools, therapists, psychotherapists, neighbours, family members, and legal professionals. Several participants described having to gather evidence, recordings, witnesses, CCTV footage, or official reports to rebut accusations. In some cases, allegations were later withdrawn or contradicted by independent evidence, yet participants emphasised that investigations, court appearances, delays in access, reputational damage, and emotional distress persisted regardless of the eventual outcome.

Overall, participants portrayed allegations as a form of post-separation abuse that extended conflict into legal, child protection, and community settings. They described accusations as powerful tools capable of undermining their credibility, disrupting relationships with their children, prolonging litigation, and creating an ongoing need to defend themselves against what they perceived as false or exaggerated claims.

Surviving the Darkness, Finding the Light: Eric's Story

Before the breakdown of his marriage, Eric described his life as stable and secure. He had a longstanding career in public service, owned his home, maintained an investment property, and looked forward to raising his children. However, concerns about his wife's alcohol misuse emerged early in the relationship. Hidden bottles, missing money, growing debts, and alcohol-related incidents gradually became part of family life. As their two children grew older, tensions within the home intensified.

Although both parents were employed, Eric became the children's primary caregiver. He managed school runs, meals, homework, and most daily routines. After taking early retirement, he devoted himself fully to parenting. Despite these efforts, the relationship continued to deteriorate. Alcohol misuse remained a constant issue, arguments became more frequent, and incidents of violence towards him began to occur. Home life became increasingly unpredictable, leaving him feeling unsafe and constantly on edge.

The situation escalated when divorce proceedings began. Eric was determined to remain in the family home because of his central role in caring for the children. During this period, he was subjected to threats and allegations that dramatically changed the course of his life. The allegations resulted in criminal investigations, arrests, court appearances, and years of legal proceedings. He described this period as devastating, with his life becoming dominated by legal battles and uncertainty.

One of the most painful consequences was the loss of contact with his children. Parenting had been a defining aspect of his identity, and prolonged separation left him grieving not only the loss of the relationship but also the everyday moments that make up family life. Professionally and personally, the consequences were equally significant. He spent years defending himself against allegations he strongly denied, accumulating legal costs exceeding €100,000. The stress was relentless, compounded by the irony of being investigated by a justice system within which he had previously worked. Public scrutiny, embarrassment, and shame added further emotional burden.

Throughout these years, Eric remained determined to establish the truth. Drawing on his investigative background, he carefully documented events, gathered evidence, maintained records, obtained transcripts, and organised information for his legal team. Rather than giving up, he channelled his energy into building a factual account of events. This process became a vital source of resilience and purpose during an exceptionally difficult period.

A major turning point occurred when independent professional assessments of the family circumstances were conducted. Evidence emerged that contradicted some of the allegations

made against him. Following a lengthy trial, a jury returned a unanimous verdict of not guilty. While the acquittal brought relief and vindication, it did not immediately erase the emotional impact of the previous years. Once the legal proceedings ended, feelings of anger, grief, and shame surfaced. He became increasingly aware of the personal costs of the ordeal, including damaged relationships, lost years, and the emotional toll on his family.

The impact on his children remained his greatest concern. They had been exposed to parental conflict, instability, alcohol misuse, and competing accounts of family events. Following reunification, Eric observed significant emotional and behavioural difficulties in his son, including anger, isolation, and problems at school. These experiences reinforced his belief that children often carry the hidden consequences of family conflict long after legal disputes have ended. Despite these challenges, Eric remained deeply committed to his children. He eventually gained custody of his son and worked to provide a stable and supportive environment. Even after years of conflict, he continued to encourage both children to maintain a relationship with their mother, believing this was important for their wellbeing. Over time, his relationship with his daughter also began to improve as trust was gradually rebuilt through regular communication and contact.

A key part of his recovery came through his involvement with Men's Aid. Following his acquittal, he felt isolated and uncertain about how to move forward. Through support groups, he met other men with similar experiences and realised he was not alone. The support, understanding, and validation he received helped reduce the shame he had carried for years and enabled him to view his experiences differently.

Today, Eric's story is one of resilience and perseverance. Despite enduring family separation, financial hardship, reputational damage, and years of legal proceedings, he continued to fight for his children and rebuild his life. Through the support of family, peers, and Men's Aid, he has moved beyond survival towards recovery. While he remains concerned about the long-term impact on his children, his story reflects remarkable endurance, the importance of support, and a steadfast commitment to his role as a father.

Impact on Children and Interactions with Tulsa

Across participants' accounts, children were frequently described as experiencing significant emotional, psychological, and relational harm as a consequence of domestic abuse, parental conflict, coercive control, and protracted legal proceedings. Many fathers remained in abusive relationships primarily to maintain contact with their children or protect them from further harm, “All I wanted to do was stay there for the kids. It was the kids. But it was exhausting” Participant 9). Participants repeatedly described fears of losing access to their children and several reported enduring abuse because they believed separation would result in diminished parental involvement.

A prominent impact was emotional distress and anxiety among children. Several fathers observed their children becoming upset, fearful, or confused during periods of conflict and separation. Participant 4 described his older daughter as "extremely upset" when informed

that he was leaving the family home, while Participant 5 recalled his son crying, "Daddy, Daddy, this is your home, you're meant to live here." Participant 9 described his daughter becoming distressed after being told that spending time with her father would negatively affect her friendships and reported that she later experienced stomach pains attributed to stress. Speaking about his son he said “I'm telling you now it was down to stress he got a grey patch in his hair after I moved out when he was only five. He has a grey patch in his hair and I'm sure it's stress related”.

Participants also reported evidence of parental alienation and manipulation of children's perceptions of their fathers. Children were allegedly told negative or false information about their fathers, resulting in damaged relationships and confusion. Participant 3 stated that after a lengthy period without contact, his children "didn't know me" and had been told that he had abandoned them. His nine-year-old son later asked, "Dad, did you rape mam?", reflecting exposure to adult allegations and conflict. Similarly, Participant 9 reported that his daughter had stored his contact details in her phone as "wife beater", illustrating the extent to which children had become exposed to hostile narratives about their fathers.

Several participants described behavioural and psychological consequences for children. Participant 3 believed his son had been profoundly affected by exposure to ongoing conflict, alcohol misuse, Garda interventions, and care proceedings. He stated that his son was "traumatised by all the madness that was going on in the house" and "will never be the same." He further described his son as socially withdrawn, struggling academically, and displaying significant anger and aggression. Other participants observed children becoming fearful of expressing affection toward their father or seeking approval from their mother before speaking, suggesting heightened emotional pressure and divided loyalties.

The findings also identified concerns regarding children's welfare and neglect. Participant 3 described his son being taken into care following Tulsa intervention and recalled collecting him in what he considered an extremely neglected condition and was described by a social worker as being "in an awful state." Participants also reported children witnessing parental alcohol misuse, domestic conflict, “She was drinking during the day, not going to work, drinking in front of the kids”…”She crashed the car down with the kids in it”. Child also witnessed Garda coming into the home arresting the fathers and repeated allegations and persistent arguments between parents.

Experiences of TUSLA

Experiences with TUSLA were mixed. Some participants viewed the agency as an important safeguard for children. In Participants 3's case, TUSLA contacted him after concerns emerged about conditions in the family home, resulting in his son being taken into care and subsequently placed with him. Several fathers noted that TUSLA assessments ultimately supported their parenting capacity and recognised the children's need for ongoing relationships with their fathers. Participant 4 recalled an assessor telling him, "your kids

need you," while Participant 5 reported that TUSLA concluded he was "a good father and I'm entitled to have time with my kids on a healthy basis." Participant 6 similarly described referrals against him being repeatedly screened out or closed following assessment.

However, several participants expressed frustration with TUSLA processes. Fathers reported multiple investigations arising from allegations made during separation and custody disputes, creating additional stress and uncertainty. Participant 5 described having to meet numerous TUSLA workers while defending allegations of child abuse, and Participant 3 criticised what he perceived as inconsistent responses and limited intervention despite ongoing concerns regarding his children's welfare. Participants frequently felt that TUSLA became involved only after significant harm had already occurred and that investigations often prolonged family conflict.

Overall, participants viewed children as among the principal victims of domestic abuse and post-separation conflict. Their accounts suggest that children experienced emotional distress, anxiety, divided loyalties, disrupted parental relationships, exposure to adult disputes, and in some cases trauma and neglect. Although TUSLA was often seen as playing a crucial role in child protection, participants described varied experiences regarding the effectiveness, consistency, and timeliness of its interventions.

The findings demonstrate that domestic abuse experienced by participants extended far beyond physical violence and was most commonly characterised by coercive control. Across all accounts, coercive control emerged as a pervasive pattern of domination involving financial abuse, social isolation, emotional manipulation, gaslighting, threats, intimidation, and the use of children to maintain power and control. Participants described losing autonomy over finances, daily activities, social relationships, and parenting decisions, often becoming increasingly isolated from family, friends, and wider support networks. The cumulative impact included fear, shame, emotional exhaustion, reduced self-confidence, and, for some men, thoughts of suicide.

Financial abuse was a prominent feature, with participants reporting restricted access to wages, bank accounts, and household finances. Verbal abuse and gaslighting further undermined self-esteem and led many men to question their memories, judgement, and abilities as fathers and partners. Several participants described being routinely criticised, belittled, or made to feel responsible for relationship difficulties. Social isolation was also common, with many reporting that relationships with parents, siblings, friends, and even children's grandparents were deliberately restricted or damaged.

Children frequently became a central mechanism of control. Participants described threats regarding child access, interference with father-child relationships, and situations in which children were exposed to hostility toward their fathers. Many men remained in abusive relationships because they feared losing contact with their children. Following separation, these concerns often intensified through legal disputes and protracted family court

proceedings. Participants generally viewed the legal system as adversarial, emotionally draining, and financially burdensome. Many reported difficulties proving their victimisation, responding to allegations, and maintaining relationships with their children. Court proceedings, legal orders, Garda involvement, and custody disputes were frequently described as extensions of the abuse. A recurring concern was the perception that fathers had limited rights and that male experiences of domestic abuse were often overlooked. Children were described as among the primary victims of both the abuse and the subsequent conflict. Fathers reported emotional distress, anxiety, behavioural difficulties, exposure to parental conflict, divided loyalties, and, in some cases, trauma and neglect. Experiences with TUSLA were mixed. While some participants felt the agency played an important role in safeguarding children and recognising the value of father-child relationships, others reported frustration with investigations, delays, and inconsistent responses.

Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated considerable resilience. Support from Men's Aid, family members, peers, and professional services was often instrumental in helping them recognise abuse, seek support, and rebuild their lives. Overall, the findings highlight the profound impact of coercive control on men, children, and family relationships, and underline the need for greater recognition and support for male victims of domestic abuse.

Emerging from the Shadows: Steve’s Story

This narrative illustrates a journey from prolonged domestic abuse and despair to resilience, recovery, and personal growth. For over four years, Steve lived in an abusive relationship characterised by coercive control, emotional and financial abuse, intimidation, and physical violence. As his partner's alcohol misuse escalated, so too did the abuse. Despite being the sole financial provider, Steve felt trapped by threats that he would lose contact with his daughter if he attempted to leave. These threats, combined with a deep commitment to his child, kept him in the relationship long after the abuse had become intolerable.

A significant barrier to seeking help was the shame Steve experienced as a male victim of domestic abuse. He struggled to reconcile his victimisation with traditional expectations of masculinity, believing that admitting he was being abused reflected personal weakness. Consequently, he concealed his experiences from those around him while his physical and mental health steadily deteriorated. He lost substantial weight, experienced chronic anxiety, and found it increasingly difficult to cope with employment and daily life.

The turning point came during a violent incident in which he was struck on the head with a large piece of wood while lying beside his young daughter. The severity of the assault, and the realisation that his daughter was present during the attack, forced him to confront the danger he was facing. This incident marked the beginning of his journey towards safety and recovery.

A crucial aspect of Steve's resilience was his willingness, eventually, to break his silence. After years of hiding the abuse, he disclosed his experiences to his employer, who had become concerned about his declining wellbeing. Rather than dismissing or questioning his account, his employer responded with compassion, offering practical support and helping him leave the family home. This experience of being believed became a foundational step in rebuilding his confidence and restoring hope.

Leaving the relationship did not immediately resolve his difficulties. Steve faced temporary homelessness, financial devastation, and uncertainty about the future. He discovered extensive debts accumulated through financial abuse, including loans and credit obligations incurred in his name. He lost much of what he had worked for, including financial security and stability. Yet, despite these overwhelming setbacks, he demonstrated remarkable perseverance.

Support from family, counselling services, and specialist organisations became central to his recovery. His sister and brother-in-law provided accommodation and emotional support when he had nowhere else to turn. Professional counselling offered validation during a period when he was experiencing severe psychological distress and suicidal thoughts. Through referral to Men's Aid, Steve found not only practical support but also a sense of belonging among others with similar experiences. Importantly, he transformed this support into action, remaining involved with Men's Aid and using his experiences to encourage other men facing similar challenges.

One of the clearest demonstrations of his resilience occurred during a suicidal crisis. Overwhelmed by fear, financial ruin, and the possibility of losing his daughter, he contemplated ending his life. In that moment, thoughts of his daughter and family gave him the strength to stop, seek help, and choose survival. He later viewed this decision as a defining moment in his recovery, marking the point at which he committed to rebuilding his life.

Although he continued to face challenges within the legal and family court system, he adopted a proactive approach to overcoming obstacles. He educated himself about legal processes, pursued further education, changed jobs, and focused on improving his health and wellbeing. Rather than becoming consumed by bitterness, he concentrated on what he could control, approaching recovery "one small step at a time."

Today, Steve describes himself as a survivor rather than a victim. He has rebuilt a meaningful and fulfilling life, enjoys a loving and supportive relationship, and maintains a strong bond with his daughter. His story highlights how resilience is not the absence of adversity but the capacity to persevere despite it. Through support, determination, faith, and the courage to seek help, he transformed profound trauma into personal growth. By sharing his experiences, he hopes to reassure other men experiencing abuse that recovery is possible, support is available, and a positive future can be achieved.

Critical Events and Reaching Out for Support

Participants frequently reflected on wider societal attitudes towards men and how these attitudes shaped their experiences of abuse, help-seeking, and disclosure. Across many accounts, there was a perception that domestic abuse is predominantly viewed as something that affects women, making it difficult for men to identify themselves as victims or to be recognised as such by others. Participants described feeling that men were expected to be strong, resilient, and capable of defending themselves, which contributed to feelings of shame and reluctance to seek help.

Several participants spoke about struggling to reconcile their victimisation with traditional expectations of masculinity. Admitting abuse was often perceived as conflicting with their role as a man, partner, and father. Some described spending years minimising or rationalising their experiences because they did not believe that what was happening to them could be considered domestic abuse. This was particularly evident among participants who remained in abusive relationships for extended periods before recognising the abuse or reaching out for support. For many, acknowledging that they were victims required overcoming deeply ingrained beliefs about strength, independence, and male responsibility.

Participants also perceived a lack of understanding among the public and within some institutions regarding male victims of domestic abuse. Several felt that allegations made against them were readily believed, while their own reports of abuse were overlooked or treated with scepticism. This perception reinforced feelings of powerlessness and isolation, particularly among those involved in legal proceedings or child-contact disputes. Men described feeling that they entered these processes from a position of disadvantage, where their experiences were often not afforded the same credibility as those of their former partners.

A recurring concern was the fear of ridicule, disbelief, or judgment if they disclosed the abuse. Participants reported worrying that family members, friends, professionals, or authorities would not take their experiences seriously because they were men. As a result, many remained silent until the abuse reached a critical point. The combination of societal expectations, stigma, and limited awareness of male victimisation contributed to delays in help-seeking and prolonged exposure to abusive behaviours.

Despite these challenges, participants highlighted the importance of specialist services in validating their experiences and helping them understand that domestic abuse can affect men. Support from organisations such as Men's Aid, counsellors, solicitors, and trusted family members often challenged their previous assumptions and enabled them to recognise their abuse. Collectively, the findings suggest that societal attitudes towards masculinity and victimhood remain significant barriers for male victims, influencing both their willingness to seek help and how their experiences are understood by others.

Critical Life Events

Participants described a number of pivotal events that fundamentally altered the course of their lives and altered their understanding of the domestic abuse. These events often represented a breaking point at which the abuse could no longer be ignored, tolerated, or rationalised. For some, this involved episodes of physical violence, emotional rejection, or escalating coercive control, while for others it centred on Garda intervention, false allegations, court proceedings, or the loss of contact with their children. Although the circumstances differed, these critical moments marked a transition from enduring abuse to recognising its impact, seeking support, ending the relationship, or becoming involved in prolonged legal disputes. Participants consistently reflected on these events as defining turning points that changed their sense of self, family relationships, and future life trajectories

Critical Events That Changed Lives And Their Relationships.

Across the participants' accounts, critical life events were often described as turning points that marked the end of tolerance for the abuse, triggered relationship breakdown, or initiated prolonged legal and family conflict. These moments were frequently associated with physical violence, false allegations, Garda involvement, separation, or a sudden realisation of the extent of the abuse.

Participant 1 Identified a severe violent incident as the decisive moment that changed his life. While lying in bed with his daughter, he was assaulted, recalling that he was "*hit in the head with a big, massive piece of wood.*" This incident represented his limit, leading him to realise that "*I need to do something because I can't, this is going to it's going to get out of control*." Reflecting on this event, he described it as the night that "*changed my life and changed my perspective how to deal with abuse."*

For **Participant 2,** the critical turning point occurred in late 2021 when his partner's behaviour became increasingly hostile. He recalled realising that *"she got very, very, very serious and nasty and I realised there's a real, real problem here."* The situation escalated when the Gardaí were called to the home and shortly afterwards, he was served with a safety order. He described this period as the point when *"my life absolutely, completely spiralled."* Following another Garda intervention, he was detained overnight and recalled being *"sick, shaking"* in a prison cell. He stated that *"my life became literally an absolute living nightmare from then on."*

Participant 3 described the most significant events in his life as a series of allegations that resulted in separation from his children and prolonged legal proceedings. He characterised a rape allegation *as "a nuclear strike. There's no coming back to that."* This was compounded by allegations of sexual abuse against his daughter and assault against his son. He reported that these accusations created overwhelming obstacles, stating that *"there was so many*

barriers I couldn't get by any of them." The resulting court *process "wrapped you up in court for such a long time."*

For **Participant 4,** the defining event emerged from a moment of emotional rejection during an already difficult period, after he had sustained a serious back injury. After returning home soaked from a walk and asking his partner for help, she responded, *"I don't love you. I don't even like you. I f……. hate you. I can't stand looking at you."* He described this exchange as the moment of clarity that led him to end the relationship. After cutting off his wet shirt with nail scissors, he concluded: *"that's all I need to hear. Let's have a chat about this. We're separating."*

Participant 5 identified family conflict and criminal justice involvement as pivotal events. A confrontation between his partner and his elderly parents revealed the severity of the situation. Shortly afterwards, he received an ultimatum *"she sends me a voice note. And basically in that voice note, I had a, it was an ultimatum to decide between her or my parents".* The situation later escalated to Garda involvement, arrest, and removal from the family home. Reflecting on this experience, he stated, *"here I am being erroneously, taken out of my family home, treated like an absolute criminal and arrested".*

For **Participant 6**, the critical event was less a single incident and more a gradual awakening to the abuse. Family members, professionals, and support services repeatedly encouraged him to leave, with his mother telling him that he needed *to "look after yourself and kind of get out of there."* Although Men's Aid, counsellors, a psychologist, and a solicitor informed him he was being abused, he remained *"in complete denial for about two years."* The turning point came in January 2023 when he overheard a conversation and realised that events had been *"really pre-planned, really structured,"* leading him to conclude, *"I've been completely duped here."*

Participant 7 described a gradual recognition of being emotionally devalued despite his active role as a father. A seemingly minor incident at a family Christmas event became symbolic of his relationship. When his partner bought drinks for everyone except him, he recalled thinking, *"I just don't exist".* This moment crystallised his feelings and became the point when he decided *"that I had enough".* He further realised *"she doesn't care about you"* and identified this as the tipping point that led him to end the marriage. After separation, he described the aftermath as *"a full-scale war".*

For **Participant 8**, the pivotal moment occurred when he finally resisted the abuse. He stated simply*, "I just know I had enough of this".* However, he reported that once he asserted himself and *"took control back,"* events rapidly deteriorated and *"just went downhill from there".*

Participant 9 described separation as the central critical event. Although he initially stated that he ended the relationship because "I can't do this anymore," he then clarified that his partner had in fact ended it, telling him, *"I want you to go. You're bringing me down*". Looking back, he also recognised early warning signs at the beginning of the relationship,

recalling that when he attempted to show affection, she would respond by telling him to *"get off me"* which he now viewed as an early *"red flag".*

These accounts demonstrate that men often reached a point where the abuse could no longer be tolerated or rationalised. Whether triggered by physical violence, emotional rejection, coercive control, false allegations, Garda involvement, or threats to their relationships with their children, these critical events acted as catalysts for change. For many participants, they marked the transition from enduring abuse in silence to recognising their victimisation, seeking support, and taking steps to regain control over their lives and future.

Reaching Out for Support: Participants' Pathways to Help-Seeking

Across participants' accounts, seeking support was rarely a straightforward process. Most men described enduring abuse, confusion, and emotional distress for prolonged periods before reaching a point where they could no longer cope alone. Feelings of shame, fear, self-doubt, and concerns about their children often delayed disclosure. When they eventually sought help, support came from a range of sources including family members, employers, counsellors, community organisations, peer-support groups, and specialist services for men experiencing domestic abuse.

Participant 1 described how embarrassment prevented him from speaking about the abuse for years, even when his employer noticed a decline in his wellbeing and work performance. He disclosed his experiences only after his boss repeatedly expressed concern. The support he received was significant, with his employer actively helping him recognise the seriousness of the situation. As his circumstances deteriorated, he also reached out to his sister, despite feeling considerable shame. Her support, together with that of her husband, became crucial during a period when he feared homelessness. Professional counselling was another turning point. He also spoke positively about a counsellor who was deeply affected by his story, noting that she rarely encountered men presenting with experiences such as his.

Participant 2 sought support through both formal and informal channels. He engaged in one-to-one counselling through One Family and also contacted the Men's Development Network when he realised he was *"in trouble."* In addition to professional services, he found value in peer support, joining groups of men who had experienced similar family court and separation-related difficulties. These networks provided practical advice, emotional understanding, and reassurance that he was not alone in his experiences.

Participant 5 described a prolonged search for support while trying to save his relationship and cope with mounting psychological strain. He consulted multiple therapists, counsellors, marriage guidance services, religious supports, and crisis organisations, including Samaritans and Pieta House. Alongside formal services, he relied heavily on trusted personal relationships, particularly a supportive cousin and a parish priest. Although not all interventions were helpful, and some professionals dismissed his concerns, he continued

seeking guidance and validation from different sources in an effort to understand what was happening and find a way forward.

Participant 6 demonstrated one of the most extensive patterns of help-seeking. Initially accessing counselling through an Employee Assistance Programme, he later funded private counselling himself and attended approximately forty counselling sessions, psychiatric assessments, marriage counselling, and specialised parenting programmes. Through these encounters he was introduced to concepts such as trauma bonding and gaslighting, helping him make sense of his experiences. He also engaged with Men's Aid, the Men's Development Network, One Family, and MEND. Importantly, MEND explicitly informed him that his presentation was not consistent with that of a perpetrator *" but the examples you're given isn't for someone who's an abuser, but someone who's suffering in a controlling the coercive relationship".* This recognition appeared to be an important source of validation.

Participant 7 sought support when facing significant decisions regarding separation, mediation, and his children. Concerned about the emotional impact of the situation on his judgement, he contacted a counsellor and utilised an Employee Assistance Programme. He also reached out to his sister for advice and reassurance. His support-seeking was closely linked to ensuring that decisions about his future and his children were made from a position of clarity rather than emotional distress.

Participant 8 reported attending several private counsellors before eventually accessing Men's Aid. While he had sought support from multiple sources, he identified Men's Aid as particularly beneficial, describing the service as understanding and supportive.

Participant 9 was encouraged to seek help by his family, particularly his sisters, who were concerned about his wellbeing. Acting on their recommendation, he contacted Amen (now Men's AID). He described the service as highly beneficial and reflected on the relative lack of public awareness of specialist supports for men compared with services available for women.

Overall, participants' accounts illustrate that help-seeking was often a gradual and difficult process marked by uncertainty, stigma, and repeated attempts to find appropriate support. Family members, employers, peer groups, counsellors, and specialist organisations all played important roles in helping men recognise abuse, validate their experiences, and begin the process of recovery. A recurring theme across accounts was the importance of being believed and understood, particularly by services with experience of working with male victims of domestic abuse.

Participants' Experiences of Finding and Using Men's Aid

Throughout all the interviews, Men's Aid emerged as a vital source of support during periods of significant emotional distress, family conflict, legal challenges, and psychological trauma. Most participants sought help at a point when they felt overwhelmed, isolated, or unable to cope with the impact of abuse and relationship breakdown. For several men,

contact with Men's Aid followed a period of deteriorating mental health and, in some cases, suicidal thoughts.

Participant 1 described reaching a crisis point after experiencing financial difficulties and severe psychological distress. He explained, *"I reached out to Men's Aid, and I went out to see a counsellor because I was so afraid for my health that I couldn't function properly. I had a suicidal thought."* Similarly, Participant 4 was referred to Men's Aid by a counsellor who recognised that he required specialist support. Reflecting on this referral, he stated, *"Men's Aid is the reason I'm still here".* He also shared *" We went to her parents' house for Saint Stephen's Day, and I think all that day I was just thinking, how do I do this without my kids ever knowing I committed suicide? It has to be an accident, 'cos I don't ever want them to think that I didn't love them enough to stay".*

Several others were also directed to the service by counsellors who identified domestic abuse in their accounts. Participant 7 recalled that professionals repeatedly told him, *"you should go and talk to Men's Aid,"* while Participant 6 was advised to contact the organisation after completing counselling.

Others found Men's Aid independently through online searches, social media, or peer recommendations. Following a traumatic separation, Participant 2 remembered searching for support and eventually contacting the organisation: *"I remember looking up Men's Aid… I contacted them and they said, 'Yeah, come along to the meeting in Navan.'"* Participant 3 discovered Men's Aid after being acquitted in court and struggling with anger, shame, and concerns about how others viewed him. He recalled attending his first meeting and realising, *"Jesus, I thought it was only just me."* Participant 8 similarly found the organisation through a social media post, explaining that after meeting XXXX he *"got great relief out of it."*

A strong theme throughout the narratives was the profound relief participants experienced on discovering that other men shared similar experiences. Many initially believed they were alone in what they were enduring. Participant 2 explained, *"I thought I was alone in this for many years,"* while later describing the support group as the place where he realised he was not *"the only one in the country."* Likewise, Participant recalled attending his first group session and leaving with *"the weight of the world"* lifted from his shoulders after hearing other men describe experiences similar to his own.

Participants consistently highlighted the importance of group support. The meetings provided a safe environment where they could discuss experiences of abuse, legal disputes, false allegations, coercive control, and difficulties maintaining relationships with their children. Participant 4 explained that within the group men could openly express emotions that were often misunderstood elsewhere: *"It's not foreign to sit down with another man and go I haven't seen my daughter in a year and I'm gutted about it."* He noted that group members understood these losses because *"they've been alienated also."*

For many men, the group environment reduced feelings of shame and embarrassment. Participant 6 described initially feeling deeply uncomfortable discussing his experiences, stating, *"I was embarrassed, first of all, to tell anybody about this."* However, seeing *"ex-guards, highly accomplished people"* attending the sessions helped him gain confidence and realise that domestic abuse affected men from all backgrounds. Similarly, Participant 7 acknowledged that he still struggled to describe himself as having been abused but credited Men's Aid with helping him understand what had happened and its impact on both himself and his family.

Participants repeatedly praised the staff, particularly the counselling team, for their empathy, understanding, and commitment. Participant explained that XXXX *"understood from the minute I sat in this chair,"* while Participant described both counsellors as *"empathetic people by nature."* He added that despite limited resources, *"they give everything that they have."* Participant 7 similarly described the team as *"absolutely brilliant"* and stated that they had *"helped me immensely to get to where I am now."*

Beyond emotional support, participants valued the practical knowledge and reassurance they gained from Men's Aid. Men spoke about learning about coercive control, trauma bonding, gaslighting, legal processes, child protection investigations, and coping strategies. Participant 6 explained that Men's Aid helped him realise *"it wasn't me"* and gave him confidence to navigate ongoing legal and family difficulties. He reflected that one of the most important lessons he learned was that he was *"not alone"* and that similar experiences occurred across many families.

Many participants continued attending long after their immediate crises had passed. Participant 1 explained that he remained involved because he wanted *"to help other lads as well"* and be an example to men who were struggling. Similarly, Participant continued attending because he wished he had found the service sooner and hoped to support newcomers facing similar circumstances.

Although experiences of Men's Aid were overwhelmingly positive, participants identified areas where services could be strengthened. The most common recommendation was increased funding and greater public awareness. Participant 9 argued that *"nobody knows about them. Everyone knows about Women's Aid,"* while Participant 7 suggested that greater visibility would help more men access support earlier. Participants also called for additional centres and improved accessibility, with Participant 5 noting that some men travelled *"three or four hours"* to attend meetings. Participant 6 recommended online support groups, arguing that virtual participation could reduce barriers for men who felt embarrassed sharing their experiences face-to-face.

Finally, several participants highlighted the absence of refuge accommodation for male victims. Participant 3 stated, *"there's no refuge for men in Ireland,"* while Participant 9 stressed that Men's Aid *"need a refuge definitely for a start."* Participants described meeting

men who had lost their homes, were living in temporary accommodation, or had nowhere else to go.

Overall, participants viewed Men's Aid as a transformative service that provided understanding, validation, practical guidance, and hope. Many credited the organisation with improving their mental health, helping them rebuild their lives, strengthening their resilience, and ensuring they no longer faced their experiences in isolation.

Summary and Discussion

The aims and objectives of the MENCALLTIME study was to explore patterns over time relating to male victims of domestic violence and abuse from a variety of perspectives. This study explored this phenomenon from a variety of perspectives, producing new understanding relating to DVA victimisation and time for male victims in Ireland. The volume of findings presented in this report highlight the in depth and complex nature of DVA as it is experienced by men over time. The fact that there were no seasonal, calendar time points or specific effects identified could be interpreted as a distinguishing factor between male and female victim populations and at least provides clear research evidence of a gendered distinction in relation to one facet of DVA initiation. However, the fact that men's life stories identified critical life events rather than distinct calendar events as turning points for men, provides important national evidence that the time for men to call is 'their time', reflecting their particular life situation and need. In essence, this provides crucial information firstly for men experiencing violence to acknowledge that they are not alone in their plight. It is hoped that men may find resonance in the life stories of other men and appreciate that the DVA life story is filled with turning points and that accessing support can be transformational. For service providers, identifying that any time can be a man's time to call is an important point of note.

The distinction between the number of contacts and the number of male victims (clients) identified in the dataset illustrates an interesting phenomenon where others access the service on behalf of another. The presence of contacts initiated by non-victims (i.e. family members, professionals and other individuals) highlights an overwhelming concern on behalf of others for vulnerable men and is worth noting.

In relation to male victim (client figures), this study provides significant new understanding regarding how men utilise services over time. The fact that most men utilise the service on a number of occasions suggests that continuity of service and support is an important factor for service provision. It is suggested that these prevalence figures are likely conservative because many men do not disclose abuse nor contact services for support. Barriers to reporting include feelings of shame, fear of being disbelieved, concerns regarding continued access to children following relationship breakdown, and the limited availability of services specifically designed for male victims. Consequently, as Kolbe and Büttner (2020) argue, it is likely that DVA against men may be considerably more widespread.

In relation to DVA prevalence amongst clients of Men's Aid Ireland, findings reflect the international research which identifies that male victims experience a range of abusive behaviours, including physical, psychological, financial, and coercive forms of abuse, while often encountering substantial barriers when seeking support from healthcare, social, and legal systems (Douglas & Hines, 2011; Huntley et al., 2019). Population-based research consistently demonstrates that a minority of domestic abuse victims are male (Babu & Kar, 2009; Nybergh, et al. 2013). National victimisation surveys conducted across several Western countries suggest that between one-quarter and one-third of individuals reporting domestic abuse victimisation are men (Moore, 2021). More up to date national prevalence data was identified as a priority in the Third National Strategy. This will prove useful in providing a more contemporary understanding of national prevalence of DVA victimisation across Ireland.

Some argue that prevalence statistics based solely on physical assault underestimate the true scale of abuse experienced by men (Kolbe & Büttner, 2020) given the nature of violence against men and the phenomenon of second wave abuse (Corbally 2011) which highlights that abuse can be indirectly perpetrated. Direct comparisons between studies should be interpreted cautiously, as prevalence estimates are heavily influenced by differences in study design, definitions of abuse, and the inclusion or exclusion of non-physical forms of victimisation. A true prevalence of domestic abuse against men remains difficult to determine accurately.

In the United Kingdom, data published by the Office for National Statistics estimated that 7.9% of women (1.3 million) and 4.2% of men (695,000) experienced domestic abuse during the previous year (Elkin, 2018). These findings indicate that although women continue to experience higher rates of victimisation, a substantial number of men are also affected by domestic abuse. Furthermore, reporting rates remain considerably lower than estimated victimisation rates, suggesting the existence of substantial hidden prevalence among both men and women (Elkin, 2018). We would suggest that there is resonance between both of these points and the situation in Ireland.

The fact that male victims experience persistent and severe patterns of coercive control, often resulting in significant psychological harm (Graham-Kevan & Powney, 2021) is unfortunately not a new finding. Evidence from support services reinforces our study findings. Analysed call data from 719 men contacting a UK domestic abuse helpline and found that men most commonly sought support for emotional and psychological abuse rather than physical assaults. Many described long-term patterns of control, intimidation, and emotional manipulation that profoundly affected their wellbeing and help-seeking behaviours (Hine, Wallace, et al., 2022).

Similarly, research by Sandra Walklate, Kate Fitz-Gibbon, and colleagues highlighted coercive control as a central feature of men's victimisation experiences. The authors argued that gendered assumptions about domestic abuse have often obscured men's experiences,

contributing to under recognition by services and professionals (Walklate et al., 2022). Clearly the findings of this study resonate with international literature highlighting its potentially devastating impact the lives.

Legal and institutional responses to domestic abuse have historically been shaped by the understanding that intimate partner violence is primarily perpetrated by men against women. As a result, legislation, policy initiatives, intervention programmes, and victim support services were largely developed to protect women and children, with comparatively little attention given to men who experience abuse. That this gendered framework have contributed to a situation in which male victims are often overlooked within legal and social service systems (Deshpande, 2019; Enakele, 2019).

Male victims frequently report fears that they will not be believed, that their experiences will be minimised, or that they will be viewed as the perpetrator rather than the victim. Some men described being ridiculed when reporting abuse, while others reported that police or support services assumed they were responsible for the violence despite evidence of their own injuries. Such experiences can discourage reporting and contribute to the under-recognition of male victimisation within the legal system (Enakele, 2019; Huntley et al., 2019; Kolbe & Büttner, 2020).

The literature also highlights how prevailing social expectations surrounding masculinity can influence legal responses. Men may feel ashamed to disclose abuse because victimisation conflicts with traditional views of male strength and self-reliance. These societal attitudes can be reinforced within criminal justice and social welfare systems, making it more difficult for men to access protection, advocacy, and support services. Consequently, many male victims remain hidden from official statistics and are less likely to engage with formal legal processes (Huntley et al., 2019; Morgan & Wells, 2016; Scott-Storey et al., 2023).

In contrast to the well-established legal pathways available to female victims, both papers identify a lack of dedicated services, specialist shelters, and tailored support mechanisms for men. Kolbe and Büttner acknowledge that awareness of male victimisation is increasing, but argue that further development of counselling services, support networks, and victim-centred legal responses remains necessary. They advocate for a more gender-inclusive approach in which men are afforded the same opportunities for forensic documentation, evidence collection, legal protection, and access to specialist services as female victims (Kolbe & Büttner, 2020). While legal responses to domestic abuse have become increasingly sophisticated for women over recent decades, equivalent systems for male victims remain less developed. This disparity reflects both the historical origins of domestic violence policy and the continuing influence of gendered assumptions about victimhood, highlighting the need for more inclusive legal and support frameworks that recognise and respond to abuse regardless of gender (Enakele, 2019; Kolbe & Büttner, 2020).

Research also shows that some men experience alienating behaviours in which children are used within a wider pattern of coercive control and post-separation abuse (Bates and Hine,

2023) as well as second wave abuse (Corbally 2011). This phenomenon was identified in both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study and given the fact that three quarters of male victims identified in this study are fathers, this is clearly an ongoing aspect relating to DVA and men which requires particular attention going forward. For men experiencing abuse, the significance of time relates to men's individual times in their own lives, their life story and critical events which impact the quality of life with their families. The importance of service response and appropriate service provision cannot be underestimated.

Conclusion

Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA) unfortunately continues to be a serious problem in societies worldwide. The common phrase "time waits for no man" is an apt statement in highlighting the inescapable fact that time cannot be altered, delayed or stopped. However, within the time of a man's life, there are high points and low points, influenced by individuals, experiences and contexts. The MENCALLTIME study sought to explore time as it related to men who contact Men's Aid Ireland over three calendar years. Through analysing contacts, clients and speaking directly with men, we found that it was critical life events within a man's life (and not specific calendar events) that influenced his time to reach out and seek support from service providers. This ambitious study provides an evidence base from which services can be augmented to enhance support services. Anyone who experiences DVA is experiencing a difficult time in their lives and it every service dedicated to respond to DVA victims endeavour to act in a timely fashion within resources provided to respond effectively. Time is crucial and precious; in recognising DVA, disclosing DVA, and seeking support. We hope that this report is reflective of the vision of Cuan, the Domestic Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency as well as the Third National Strategy in enhancing our understanding and service responses for the betterment of Irish society.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Interview schedule

All 'sub sessions' happened in the same interview time period following a brief break for the participant in between.

Sub session 1 – Open narrative question

"As you know, I am interested in understanding men's experiences of domestic abuse and how these experiences have affected their lives. I appreciate your willingness to speak with me, and I recognise that sharing personal experiences can sometimes be difficult. Please take your time and tell your story in whatever way feels most comfortable for you. There is no right or wrong place to begin. I would like to hear about the events, experiences, and moments that have been important to you, and how they have influenced your life up to now. I will listen carefully without interrupting, taking only brief notes for any questions we may return to afterwards.

Sub session 2 – Follow up questioning arising from open narrative question

Here we focussed on particular events or turning points in the lived life that were of interest. Questions were framed as follows:

- *"You said…….(add the participants words here)…..do you remember any more about that particular (occasion/event/time/incident/situation)? How it all happened?"*

- *Or " "You said…….(add the participants words here)…..do you have any thoughts or feelings about that time?*

This kind of questioning is continued until narrative data collection is complete.

Sub session 3 – Follow up from open narrative question. Exploring times and turning points

- *"In your opinion, what were the particular times of note for you as you navigated the experience of domestic abuse?*

- *"What was the key turning point for you to prompt you to seek support/tell someone?"*

- *"What was your experience of interacting with men's aid at the time?"*

- "*How might your experience might have been improved? (here we are trying to seek out how men's aid and other services could respond better)"*

When the interview is complete, the participant is asked if there is anything else they would like to say prior to concluding the interview.

Appendix II: Overview of studies which explored seasonality

Table 5: Overview of studies which explored seasonality

Study	Country	Study period	Sample / population	Sex / gender	Data source	What was measured	Temporal factor	Statistical method
Card & Dahl (2011)	USA	1995–2006	General (family violence)	Both (male→female focus)	Police reports (NIBRS)	Reported incidents	NFL 'upset' losses (event)	Quasi-experimental event regression
Kirby, Francis & O'Flaherty (2014)	England	2002–2010	General	Both (mostly female victims)	Police DA reports (Lancashire)	Reported incidents	World Cup match days (event)	Descriptive / interrupted counts
Kirby & Birdsall (2022)	International	Multiple tournaments	General	Both	Police DA reports	Reported incidents	World Cup (international test)	Descriptive comparison
Collins (2026)	USA	Updated NFL panel	General	Both	Police reports (NIBRS)	Reported incidents	NFL upset losses (replication)	Regression re-analysis
Piquero et al. (2021)	Multi (18 studies)	2020	General	Both	Police calls/reports; some hotline	Reported incidents / calls	COVID-19 lockdowns (shock)	Meta-analysis
Boserup, McKenney & Elkbuli (2020)	USA	Early 2020	General	Both	Police report counts	Reported incidents / calls	COVID-19 onset (shock)	Descriptive synthesis
Hughes (2025)	USA (Los Angeles)	2020–2023	General	Both	LAPD police records (74,776)	Reported incidents	Month / season; COVID	SARIMA time-series
Sanz-Barbero et al. (2018)	Spain (Madrid)	2008–2016	Female victims	Female	016 calls, reports, femicides	Calls / reports / femicides	Ambient heat / heat waves (lagged)	Time-series (Poisson)
Koutaniemi & Einö (2019)	Finland	2017	General	Both	Google searches + police calls	Help-seeking + reported calls	Month / season	Descriptive temporal
Khurana, Prakash & Loder (2022)	USA	2005–2019	General (assault victims)	Both	ED injury data (NEISS)	Hospital presentations (injuries)	Public holidays	Descriptive / regression
Khurana, Prakash, Chopra & Loder (2023)	USA	Multi-year	General (assault victims)	Both	ED assault-injury data	Hospital presentations	Super Bowl (event)	Descriptive / regression

Study	Country	Study period	Sample / population	Sex / gender	Data source	What was measured	Temporal factor	Statistical method
Schneider, Harknett & McLanahan (2016)	USA	Fragile Families cohort	Female victims (mothers)	Female victim / male perpetration	Longitudinal survey	Self-reported victimisation	Economic shock / unemployment	Panel regression
Brownridge et al. (2008)	Canada	GSS survey	Female	Women	National victimisation survey	Self-reported victimisation	Recent separation	Descriptive / regression
Einö et al. (2023)	Finland	Register period	General (wives & husbands)	Both	Record linkage (police + divorce)	Reported incidents	Timing around divorce	Register time-analysis
Mele (2009)	USA	Police data	General	Both	Police incident data	Reported incidents (repeat)	Time between incidents	Temporal / survival analysis
Lauritsen & White (2014), BJS	USA	1993–2010	General (violent crime)	Both	NCVS survey	Self-reported victimisation	Season	Descriptive seasonal analysis

Appendix III: Overview of findings from selected literature, appraisal and relevance

Table 6: Overview of findings from selected literature, appraisal and relevance

Study	Main result	Direction	Sig.	Seasonality?	Female-specific finding	Male-specific finding	Proposed explanation	Main limitation	Relevance to MENCALLTIME	DOI
Card & Dahl (2011)	~10% rise in police reports of at-home male→female violence in hours after unexpected home-team losses	↑ (after upsets)	Yes	YES (event)	Rise concerns male-on-female violence	Not measured	Negative emotional cue / loss aversion	Reports not incidence; 'upset' losses only	Windowed hour/day event tests around fixtures	10.1093/qje/qjr001
Kirby, Francis & O'Flaherty (2014)	DA reports +26% when England played, +38% after losses; rising baseline across tournaments	↑	n/r (large %)	YES (event)	Majority of victims female	Not disaggregated	Emotional cues + alcohol + gendered viewing	Reports; not sex-split	Test Men's Aid contacts around major fixtures	10.1177/0022427813494843
Kirby & Birdsall (2022)	Examines whether the World Cup–DA association generalises internationally	↑ (varies by country)	n/r	MIXED	—	—	Cultural / consumption differences	Small, varied data	Temper external-validity expectations	10.1177/0032258X211007182

Study	Main result	Direction	Sig.	Seasonality?	Female-specific finding	Male-specific finding	Proposed explanation	Main limitation	Relevance to MENCALLTIME	DOI
Collins (2026)	Emotional-cue (upset-loss) effect smaller / less robust in updated data	↓ (attenuated)	Weaker	MIXED	—	Not sex-split	Methodological scrutiny of the original effect	Single design; re-analysis	Caution: pre-register windows; avoid over-reading spikes	10.3390/ijerph23060768
Piquero et al. (2021)	~8% increase in domestic violence following stay-at-home orders	↑	Pooled sig	YES (shock)	—	Not disaggregated	Confinement, stress, reduced escape/oversight	Heterogeneous outcomes pooled	Benchmark the 2022–24 post-COVID tail	10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2021.101806
Boserup, McKenney & Elkbuli (2020)	~20–30% increases in several jurisdictions early in lockdown	↑	n/r	YES (shock)	—	—	Confinement + stressors	Commentary on report counts	Contextualise the Men's Aid COVID demand surge	10.1016/j.ajem.2020.04.077
Hughes (2025)	Stable seasonal + autoregressive dynamics; NO distinct pandemic-specific shift in reported volume	~ (COVID); modest seasonal	Modelled	MIXED	—	Not sex-split	Routine seasonal/autoregressive dynamics	Reports only; one city	Best-practice method template; caution on assuming a COVID break	10.3390/bs16010048
Sanz-Barbero et al. (2018)	IPV calls/reports/femicides rose in the days after heat and heat waves	↑ (lagged)	Sig	YES (weather)	Female-only effect	Not studied	Heat–aggression mechanism	Female-only; ecological; lagged	Exploratory weather merge with contact dates	10.1016/j.scitotenv.2018.06.368
Koutaniemi & Einö (2019)	Help-seeking searches peaked mid-summer and Christmas–New Year; differed from police-call seasonality	↑ at those periods	n/r	YES (help-seeking)	—	Not sex-split	Holidays raise exposure and salience/opportunity	Single year; not sex-split	Directly models help-seeking timing (like contacts)	10.1177/1403494819834098
Khurana, Prakash & Loder (2022)	Assault-injury ED presentations higher on/around major holidays	↑	Sig	MIXED	—	Not IPV-sex-specific	Holiday stressors + alcohol + care-seeking	Assault broadly, not IPV-specific	Triangulates holiday effect in injury data	10.1007/s10140-022-02103-8
Khurana, Prakash, Chopra & Loder (2023)	Assault-related ED visits shift around the Super Bowl	↑ around event	Reported	YES (event)	—	Not sex-split	Alcohol / gambling / emotional investment	ED assault broadly	Second data stream confirming event effects	10.1007/s10140-023-02188-9
Schneider, Harknett & McLanahan (2016)	Rising unemployment/economic uncertainty → more abusive/controlling behaviour	↑	Sig	YES (economic)	Victimisation measured for women	Men's job-loss anxiety a driver	Economic stress / masculine breadwinner anxiety	US mothers cohort; specific	Align contact trends with Irish economic indicators	10.1007/s13524-016-0462-1

Study	Main result	Direction	Sig.	Seasonality?	Female-specific finding	Male-specific finding	Proposed explanation	Main limitation	Relevance to MENCALLTIME	DOI
Brownridge et al. (2008)	Separated women faced several-fold higher risk than married women	↑	Sig	YES (life-event)	Female sample	—	Separation as loss of control for perpetrator	Cross-sectional; female	Separation as a candidate turning point / trigger	10.1177/0886260507307914
Einö et al. (2023)	Partner-violence risk elevated around separation for both spouses; peak near separation	↑ near separation	Sig	YES (life-event)	Wives	Husbands (male victims)	Separation conflict; legal transition	Registered violence only	Rare male-inclusive separation-window evidence	10.1111/jomf.12881
Mele (2009)	Risk of a repeat incident highest in the period immediately after a prior one	↑ (short-term)	Sig	YES (short-term)	—	Not sex-split	Routine/opportunity; escalation	Reports; one jurisdiction	Design repeat-contact / inter-contact-interval analysis	10.1007/s10896-009-9260-5
Lauritsen & White (2014), BJS	Modest seasonal variation in some violent victimisation; varies by type	↑ small (warm months)	Modest	MIXED	—	Not IPV-male-specific	Routine activities / exposure	DV not isolated	Set realistic (modest) effect-size expectations	NCJ 245959

No dedicated study of male-victim seasonality was identified in the searches undertaken.

Appendix IV: Women versus men — evidence strength by factor, with supporting studies

Strength graded separately for women (W) and men (M): Strong / Moderate / Weak / Absent. Evidence from women is NOT assumed to apply to men. a.

Table 7: Women Versus Men – Evidence Strength by Factor, with Supporting Studies

Factor	Str W	Evidence — women	Str M	Evidence — men	Key supporting studies
Month	Weak	Modest month-to-month variation in some series	Absent	Not analysed for men	Hughes 2025; Lauritsen & White 2014
Season / summer	Weak–Mod	Modest warm-season elevation in some violence	Absent	Not analysed	Lauritsen & White 2014; Hughes 2025
Weekends / day of week	Moderate	Weekend/night clustering in police & ED data	Absent	Not analysed	(police/ED literature); Hughes 2025
Holidays (general)	Moderate	Elevated help-seeking + injury presentations	Absent	Not analysed	Khurana 2022; Koutaniemi & Einö 2019

Factor	Str W	Evidence — women	Str M	Evidence — men	Key supporting studies
Christmas / New Year	Moderate	Rises in help-seeking indicators	Absent	Untested	Koutaniemi & Einö 2019
Easter	Weak	Some holiday clustering (not Easter-specific)	Absent	Untested	(holiday literature)
Heat / weather	Moderate	Heat waves → female IPV calls/reports/femicide	Absent	Not studied	Sanz-Barbero et al. 2018
Sporting events	Moderate	World Cup / NFL upsets → reported DA & ED visits	Absent	No male-victim study	Card & Dahl 2011; Kirby 2014; Khurana 2023
Economic stress	Moderate	Recession/unemployment → more abuse (self-report)	Weak	Men's economic anxiety drives perpetration; victim link unstudied	Schneider et al. 2016
COVID-19	Strong	Robust rise in reports/calls (~8% pooled)	Weak–Mod	One lockdown study; 37% Men's Aid spike	Piquero 2021; Boserup 2020; Iliyasu 2024
Separation / leaving	Strong	Separation sharply elevates risk (incl. lethal)	Weak	Register data suggest elevated risk for husbands too	Brownridge 2008; Einö 2023
Pregnancy / postpartum	Strong	Well-established elevated-risk window	Absent (N/A)	No direct male analogue	(pregnancy-IPV literature)
Alcohol-linked periods	Moderate	Alcohol a proximal correlate; weekend/event clustering	Weak	Alcohol prominent in male IPV accounts; timing untested	(event/alcohol literature); Iliyasu 2024
Police reporting	Strong	Reporting patterns well studied for women	Weak	Men report far less; when they do, may be mis-identified	Douglas & Hines 2011; Karystianis 2024
Helpline use	Moderate	Help-seeking rises at holidays/crises	Weak	Profiles exist (ManKind; Men's Aid) but no timing analysis	Koutaniemi & Einö 2019; Hine 2022; Corbally 2023
Healthcare presentation	Moderate	Holiday/event effects in ED injury data	Absent	Not analysed for male IPV	Khurana 2022, 2023
Repeat victimisation	Strong	Time-structured; risk highest soon after an incident	Absent	Unquantified for men	Mele 2009
Help-seeking timing (overall)	Moderate	Rises at holidays + crises	Absent	Not modelled; men delay for years	Koutaniemi & Einö 2019; Huntley 2019

Appendix V: Overview of studies that examined masculinity and the male experience of abuse

Table 8: Overview of studies that examined masculinity and the male experience of abuse

Study	Country	Design / sample	Abuse focus	Key findings	Unusual / notable finding	Relevance to MENCALLTIME
Corbally, Hine & Kestell (2023) — MENCALLHELP	Ireland	Helpline data; 2,507 calls, 715 men	All (psych ~70%)	Profiled Irish male help-seekers; psychological abuse most common; female perpetrators predominate	Calls often long; psychological (not physical) abuse dominates	Direct predecessor + data source
Corbally (2015)	Ireland	Biographical-narrative	Female-perpetrated IPV	Men use distinct narrative strategies to reconcile victimhood with masculinity	Men articulate abuse differently from women	Template for the narrative strand
Corbally (2024)	Ireland/intl	Conceptual/qualitative	IPV	Male victimhood experienced as 'fragmented', non-linear	Recognition is fragmented, not a single event	Lens for structural narrative analysis
Hine, Wallace & Bates (2022)	UK	ManKind charity call data	All DVA	Profiles male callers' characteristics + needs	Closest UK analogue to Men's Aid data	Profiling template for contact data
Hine, Bates & Wallace (2022)	UK	Qualitative; helpline staff	All DVA	Non-recognition is the first hurdle; long trust-building calls	Masculinity blocks self-identification as victim	How disclosure shapes contacts
Taylor, Bates, Colosi & Creer (2022)	UK	Qualitative/survey	All incl. coercive control	Masculine norms + fear of disbelief + gendered services	Fear of losing children a major barrier	Interview prompts + recruitment framing
Huntley et al. (2019)	UK	Systematic review + QES	All DVA	Five barriers to help-seeking	Men describe disbelief in their own victimhood	Frames the topic guide
McLeod et al. (2024)	Western (review)	Systematic review	All DVA	Culture + identity shape help-seeking	Cultural response often disbelieving	Culturally-aware analysis
Scott-Storey et al. (2023)	Canada (review)	Critical review	All IPV	Men's experiences under-theorised + under-served	Field itself neglects male victims	Positions the review's rationale
Douglas & Hines (2011)	USA	Survey of men who sought help	All IPV	Formal services often unhelpful; treated as perpetrator	Some men who called police were themselves arrested	Explains delays + low reporting
Hines, Douglas & Berger (2015)	USA	Measure development	Legal/administrative aggression	Defined + measured false-allegation + custody-threat tactics	Institutions weaponised against male victims	Code coercive/administrative control

Study	Country	Design / sample	Abuse focus	Key findings	Unusual / notable finding	Relevance to MENCALLTIME
Drijber, Reijnders & Ceelen (2013)	Netherlands	Survey of male victims	All DVA	Characterised victims + perpetrators; low official reporting	Partners threatened false allegations	Reporting-gap evidence
Karystianis et al. (2024)	Australia	Police-narrative text analysis	All DVA	Characterises adult male victims from police narratives at scale	Shows police records can profile male victims	Police-data profiling method
Bates (2020)	UK	Qualitative	Female-perpetrated	Serious mental-health impact	'No one would ever believe me'	Impact + masculinity themes
Bates & Weare (2020)	UK	Qualitative	Sexual violence	Sexual violence by female partners is present + serious	Under-recognised as sexual violence	Abuse-type coding
Hogan, Clarke & Ward (2021)	UK	Qualitative	Female-perpetrated	Help-seeking shaped by shame + service gaps	—	Help-seeking + staying/leaving
Walklate et al. (2022)	Australia	Qualitative; men's accounts	Coercive control	Men read control through hegemonic masculinity	'Losing control', not victimisation	Coding coercive control
Machado & Farinha (2023)	Multi (review)	Systematic review	IPV (het. men)	Reasons men stay: children, commitment, norms	Reasons partly differ from women's	Staying/leaving theme
Dim & Elabor-Idemudia (2018)	Canada	Survey (GSS 2014)	Psychological	Predictors of female-to-male psychological violence	—	Abuse-type coding + predictors
Thornton et al. (2016)	UK	Survey; 184 men, 171 women	IPV vs offending	Predictors differ by sex	Women perpetrated more IPV than men in this sample	Symmetry nuance; coding
Schemmel et al. (2026)	Germany	Register survey; 1,209	Victim/offender	Prevalence + victim–offender overlap	Overlap 39.5% (highest non-physical)	Victim/perpetrator binary fits poorly
Rehman et al. (2023)	Multi (meta)	30 studies, 58,357	IPV vs men	Pooled: psych ~44%, physical ~20%, sexual ~7%	Psychological IPV the most prevalent form	Prevalence anchor
Waila et al. (2025)	Kenya	12 FGDs; 118 participants	Emotional, coercive	Community sees male IPV as real but stigmatised	Linked to bidirectional cycle with IPV vs women	Cultural framing of recognition
Spikol et al. (2024) — ME-IPV	N. Ireland	Mixed methods (QUB)	All IPV	Prevalence + experiences of NI men; service gaps	Nearest-neighbour comparator	Strong comparator for Ireland