Coercive Control, Risk Assessment and Evidence of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):

Police Response

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CCPIPV

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Executive Summary

Demographics

- Two hundred and nineteen police officers completed most, or all, of the survey in its entirety.

- Most respondents (96.1%) identified that they currently worked in a municipal police force (service).

- Sixty-three percent of respondents worked in a police agency that has a specialized unit dedicated specifically to the investigation and follow-up of IPV cases.

- 72.8% of respondents have worked with their police force for 11 years or more.

- During their policing career, most respondents (64.5%) estimated they have attended over 200 calls related to IPV.

Fictional scenario depicting an intimate partner violence situation

- 98% of all respondents consider there are concerns or "red flags" in both scenarios.

- All police officers reading the physical violence scenario agree or strongly agree that it constitutes IPV compared to those reading the non-physical violence scenario who strongly agree (67%).

- The physical violence scenario brings more certainty in determining it is a situation of IPV and includes arrestable behaviour.

- Police officers considered that both scenarios were not normal behaviour in a relationship (92.2%).

- Whether it is a physical or non-physical violence scenario, respondents would perform similar actions, such as collecting evidence or filing a report.

Risk factors associated with IPV

- Thirty-six risk factors were presented in the survey. The five considered most essential for evaluating risk are:
  - Using a weapon or threatening to use a weapon (59%)
  - Strangulation/choking (53.5%)
  - Escalation of abuse (47.5%)
  - Making threats to kill (33%)
  - Physical assault resulting in injury (31.5%).

Training and education about IPV

- Officers that are taking training sessions regularly have a better understanding of how the issue of IPV has evolved over time, as well as changes in policies and practices.

- 72% of police officers who participated in the survey received formal training on how to respond to IPV cases while 28% of police officers indicated they have no formal training on IPV.

- 40.3% of respondents, they considered that further training in IPV would be beneficial.

Introduction

In January 2022, an online survey regarding police officers' perceptions and experiences in responding to intimate partner violence (IPV) was conducted with police officers across Canada. The objective of this survey was to inform the future content and delivery of training packages, strategic decision-making and organizational protocols in the area. The survey was comprised of both closed and open-ended questions and was divided into four sections:

1 Demographic characteristics

3 Risk factors associated with intimate partner violence

2 Responses to a fictional scenario depicting an intimate partner violence situation

4 Training and education regarding intimate partner violence

This report presents the results of police officers' responses to the four sections listed above. First, we present the methodology applied and choices made for the analysis of the survey responses.

Methodology

The data compiled for this study contains a national anonymous survey distributed online to police officers across Canada, to explore how they respond to and perceive IPV. Law enforcement in Canada is separated into three tiers:

Federal, Provincial, and Municipal.

The survey was distributed to police officers by the **Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police** across Canada.

A total of

269
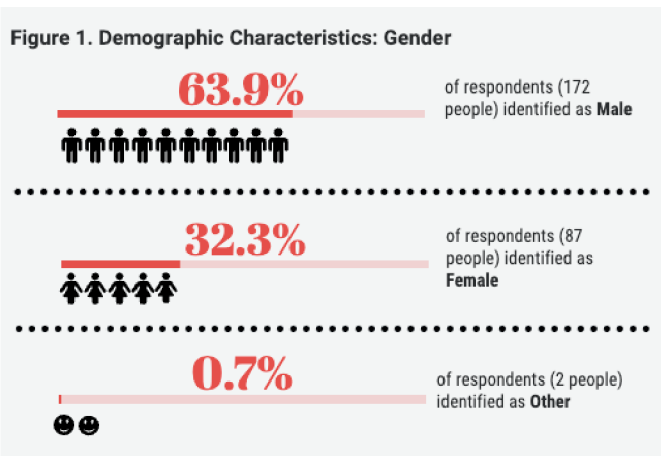
officers opened the online survey

In total, 269 police officers opened the online survey. However, not all police officers continued to respond to the remainder of the survey. From the 269 respondents, 248 police officers completed the demographic component, reviewed their assigned scenario and indicated if they perceived there to be "red flags" in the description, with most indicating they believed there were; however, neglected to respond to further questions.

An additional 29 respondents also opted not to respond to the remaining survey questions. As such, we removed these respondents from the subsequent analysis as they did not provide sufficient information regarding their assessment of IPV scenarios and perceived risk factors. The analysis is therefore based on the 219 police officers who completed most, or all, of the survey in its entirety.

1. Demographic Characteristics

A total of 269 police officers opened and responded to the demographic section of the survey, representing 63.9% male, 32.3% female and .7% "other" (Figure 1). Eight police officers chose not to respond to the gender question.

Most police officers were in either Quebec (52.9%) or Ontario (38.7%), with very few officers from other provinces responding to the survey.

Ontario 38.7% (79)

Quebec 52.9% (108)

Figure 1. Demographic Characteristics: Gender

63.9% of respondents (172 people) identified as **Male**

32.3% of respondents (87 people) identified as **Female**

0.7% of respondents (2 people) identified as **Other**
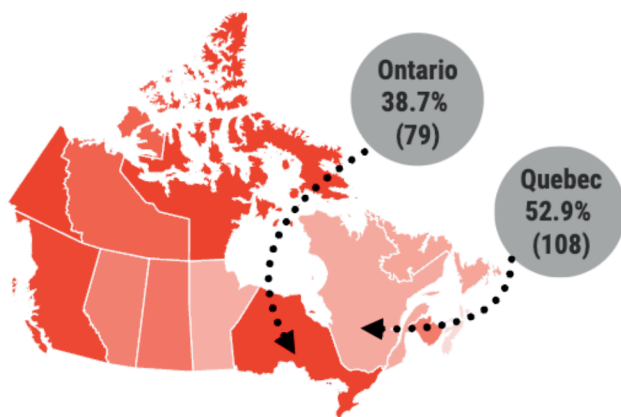
As such, the primary language was French for 54.6% of the respondents, followed by English for the remaining 45.4%.

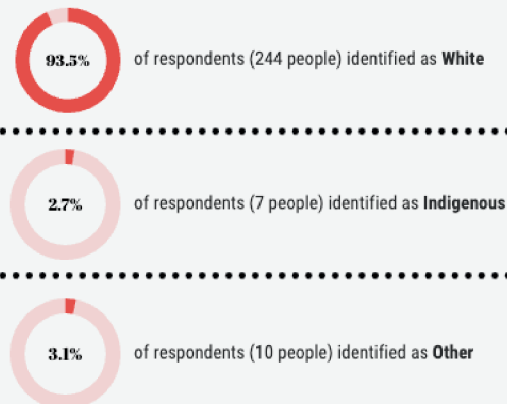The racial background of the respondents was mainly White (93.5%), with 2.7% Indigenous and 4% from other racial backgrounds or opted not to disclose. Sixty percent of the respondents were 40 years of age or over.

Figure 2. Demographic Characteristics: Racial & Ethnic Background

93.5% of respondents (244 people) identified as **White**

2.7% of respondents (7 people) identified as **Indigenous**

3.1% of respondents (10 people) identified as **Other**

Over half (58.2%) of the police officers had less than an undergraduate university degree, while 28.4% had obtained an undergraduate university degree. A small number of respondents had more than an undergraduate university degree (6.5%) or obtained a postgraduate university degree (6.9%).

Figure 3. Demographic Characteristics: Level of Education

58.2% of respondents (152 people) hold **less than an undergraduate university degree**

28.4% of respondents (74 people) hold **an undergraduate university degree (Bachelors)**

6.5% of respondents (17 people) hold **more than an undergraduate university degree**

6.9% of respondents (18 people) hold **a postgraduate university degree (Master, Ph.D.)**
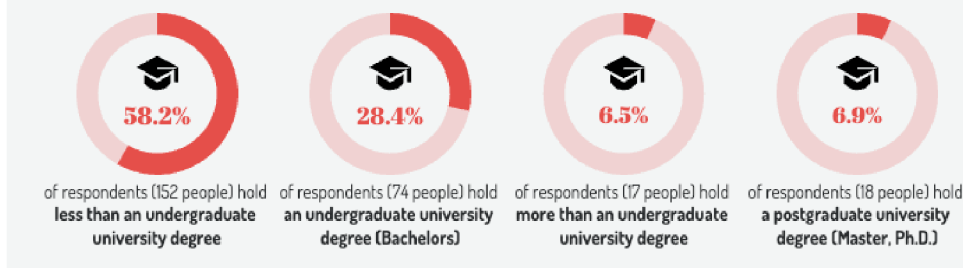
Police Organization

Most respondents (96.1%) identified that they currently worked in a municipal police force (service). Alternatively, 1.9% worked for a provincial police force, approximately 1% with the RCMP and approximately 1% with an Indigenous policing service (Figure 4) **[1]**.

Figure 4. Police Officer's Workplace Organization

96.1% of respondents (198 people) worked for a **Municipal Police Force**

1.9% of respondents (4 people) worked for a **Provincial/Territorial Police Force**

0.7% of respondents (2 people) worked for the **RCMP**

0.7% of respondents (2 people) worked for **Indigenous Policing Services**
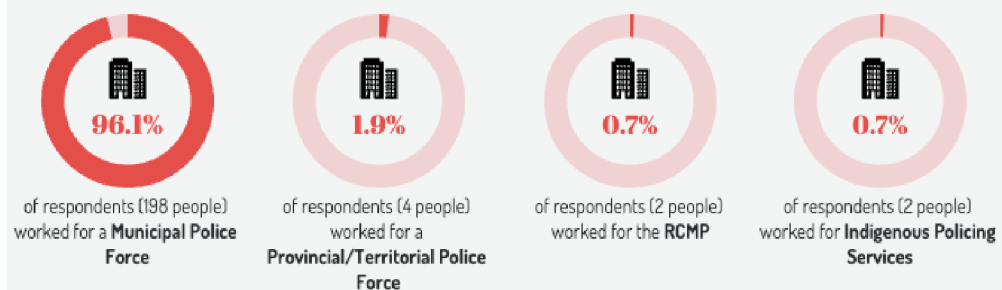
The current rank of police officers in their respective organizations are as follows: Constable/Corporal (49.5%); Corps Sergeant Major/Sergeant (20.9%); Staff Sergeant/Sergeant Major/Staff Sergeant Major (8.7%); Inspector/Deputy Chief/Superintendent/Chief/Chief Superintendent (19.4%) and 1.5% are civilians (Figure 5).

The primary role of police officers within their respective organizations are currently: investigator in an assigned unit (45.1%); patrol officer (24.0%); Executive role (13.2%); Community Police Unit/Service (9.8%) and "other" (4.4%) (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Current Rank of Police Officers within Police Organizations

49.5% of respondents (102 people) ranked **Constable/Corporal**

20.9% of respondents (43 people) ranked **Corps Sergeant Major/Sergeant**

8.7% of respondents (18 people) ranked **Staff Sergeant/ Sergeant Major/Staff Sergeant Major**

19.4% of respondents (40 people) ranked **Inspector/Deputy Chief/Chief/Superintendent**

1.5% of respondents (3 people) ranked **Other*** – Representing Civilian Employees/Research Technicians

Figure 6. Police Officer's Role in Police Organization

24% of respondents (49 people) have a **Patrol Officer role**

9.8% of respondents (20 people) have a **Community Police Unit/Service Member role**

45.1% of respondents (92 people) have an **Investigator in an assigned unit role**

0.5% of respondents (1 person) have a **Training Officer role**

3.4% of respondents (7 people) have a **blend of roles that include patrol**

13.2% of respondents (27 people) have an **Executive role**

4.4% of respondents (8 people) have an **Other role** – Including Patrol Supervisors; Clerical Work; Strategic Services; or Policy and Procedure Development
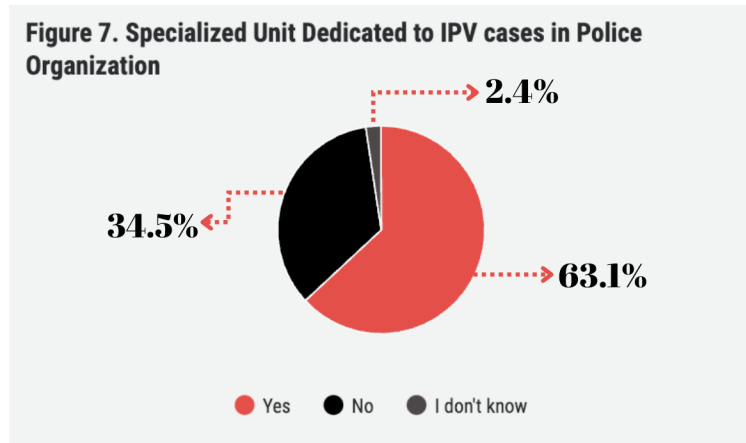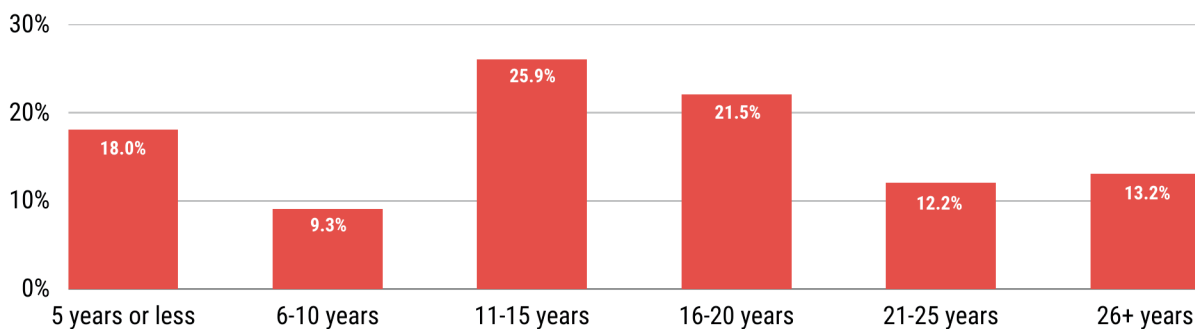
63%
of respondents worked in a police agency with a specialized IPV Unit

Sixty-three percent of respondents (Figure 7) worked in a police agency that has a specialized unit dedicated specifically to the investigation and follow-up of IPV cases compared to 34.5% of respondents who do not have such service in their agency. A small number of respondents (2.4%) were not aware if such service existed in their organization.

72.8% of respondents have worked with their police force for 11 years or more, which includes officers working in their organization for over 20 years, while 27.3% have been in their organization 10 years or less (Chart 1).

Figure 7. Specialized Unit Dedicated to IPV cases in Police Organization

2.4%

34.5%

63.1%

● Yes ● No ● I don't know

Chart 1. Years Working in Police Department/Service (N=205)

|	5 years or less	6-10 years	11-15 years	16-20 years	21-25 years	26+ years
	18.0%	9.3%	25.9%	21.5%	12.2%	13.2%

Responding to IPV Cases

Police officers were asked to provide general information about their involvement in IPV cases. For instance, before examining perceptions and attitudes towards IPV situations we asked respondents to give an idea of the number of calls they respond to that related to IPV. We were interested to know how exposed police officers were to IPV situations in their career as well as in the last 12 months prior to their participation in the survey. During their policing career, most respondents (64.5%) estimated they attended over 200 calls related to IPV (Chart 2).

Chart 2. IPV Calls Responded to in Policing Career (N=206)
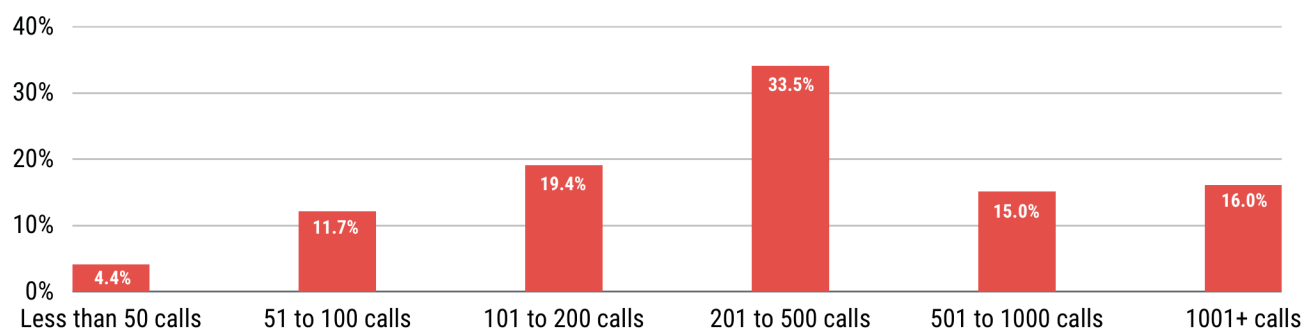
When asked how many calls police officers responded to in the year prior to the survey (Chart 3), 38% of respondents reported that they did not attend any IPV calls in the past year. For 39% of respondents, IPV cases represent about one-quarter or less of their workload. It is worth mentioning that 48.3% are working in a police department that has a dedicated specialized unit dedicated specifically to the investigation and follow up of intimate partner violence cases.

Chart 3. IPV Calls Responded to in the Past Year (N=206)
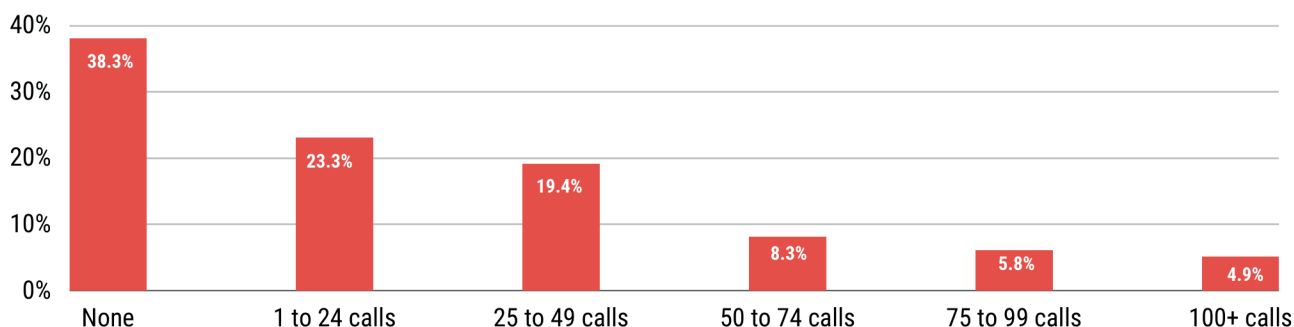
Police officers were also asked to indicate how many calls they responded to in the past year that involved perpetrators with known prior histories of IPV. Approximately a quarter (24.3%) of police officers indicated that most of their calls for service were for those with histories of IPV, 25.2% said it was about half of all the IPV calls they attended while 13.9% said that they attended only a few in the past year (Chart 4).

Chart 4. Prior Perpetrator History of IPV in Calls Responded to in the Past Year (N=202)
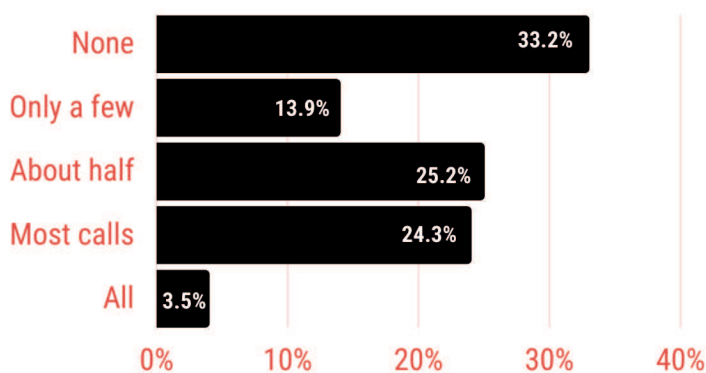
The portion of time spent handling cases of IPV varied (Chart 5). Approximately a quarter (23.9%) of respondents indicated they do not handle IPV calls at all, while 39% have about one-quarter or less and 13.7% have more than one-quarter but less than half IPV cases in their regular workload. 18% of police officers reported that three-quarters of their entire workload contain IPV calls.

Chart 5. Proportion of Workload Related to IPV (N=205)
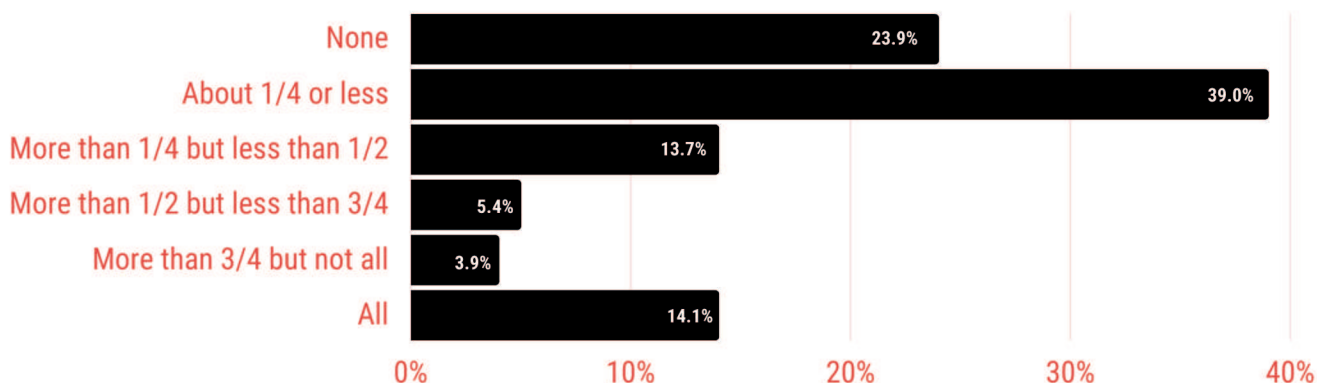
2. Responses to a Fictional Scenario Depicting an IPV Situation

Through the entire survey, we wanted to better understand how police officers in Canada are perceiving the issue of IPV, whether it involves physical or non-physical altercations, and how they would respond in both types of situations. To gain the most accurate/plausible response from police officers and to ensure researchers were not influencing respondents, no definitions of IPV were included in the survey questionnaire. This way, police officers had to rely on their own understanding of the issue to determine what constitutes an IPV criminal behaviour.

> **IPV is a multifaceted issue that takes various subtle forms of violence (such as emotional, humiliation, intimidation, isolation) to more visible (hurting physically).**

Therefore, two versions of a fictional scenario of IPV were assigned randomly to police officers:

One featuring *physical violence*
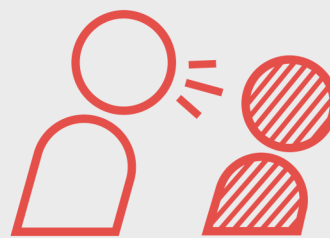
while the other one *did not*.

Questions following the scenarios referred to actions to be taken with both individuals featured in the story. **Are police officers responding similarly to the situations whether it includes physical violence or not?**

The scenario provided to police officers is presented below. The section in bold was removed from the non-physical violence scenario:

John and Emily are arguing loudly, and a neighbour calls the police. Once the police arrive, Emily says that John is her boyfriend and they recently lived together in the home that she owns. However, three days ago, she kicked him out of the home. According to Emily, John came over unannounced and they began arguing about his repeatedly showing up at her work which had caused her to be fired from her job. They also argued about how his constant, unsolicited Facebook and text messages, phone calls, and showing up unannounced and unwelcome at both work and home made her feel scared and uncomfortable. She said she asked him to leave, but he refused. **Emily says she tried to leave the house, but John grabbed her arm and flung her onto the couch. Then, she said, he struck her with the back of his hand. Emily feels her swollen eye and starts crying.** John interrupted and said, "I was just protecting her from the guys at her workplace. I didn't like the way they looked at her!" Emily then showed the officers the messages John had sent her throughout the day, including multiple messages that said he would kill himself if she didn't take him back. Upon entering the kitchen, the officers noticed a phone on the floor. Emily says she had tried to pick up the phone to call 911, but John ripped the phone out of the wall.

A total of 248 police officers

completed the first question related to the scenarios, inquiring if there were aspects of the scenarios that would cause particular concern or "red flags". Comparing responses to both scenarios, **we do not see major differences in perceptions and actions that would be taken by respondents.** In fact, **98% of all respondents consider there are concerns or "red flags".** The rest of the questions were answered by 219 police officers.

We see some differences among respondents regarding John's behaviour. When asked if John's behaviour constitutes an **arrestable offence** (Chart 7), all police officers (115) reading the scenario involving **physical violence** agree (3.5%) or strongly agree (96.5%).

Chart 6. Police perceptions towards the fictional scenarios: Physical Violence (N=115)

Legend: ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Statement	Agree	Strongly Agree
John's behaviour constitutes an arrestable offence	3.5%	96.5%
John's behaviour constitutes intimate partner violence	1.7%	98.3%
Emily should contact a relationship counsellor rather than calling the police	0.9%	
This kind of behaviour is normal in relationships	0.9%	
This is a dangerous situation	9.6%	89.6%
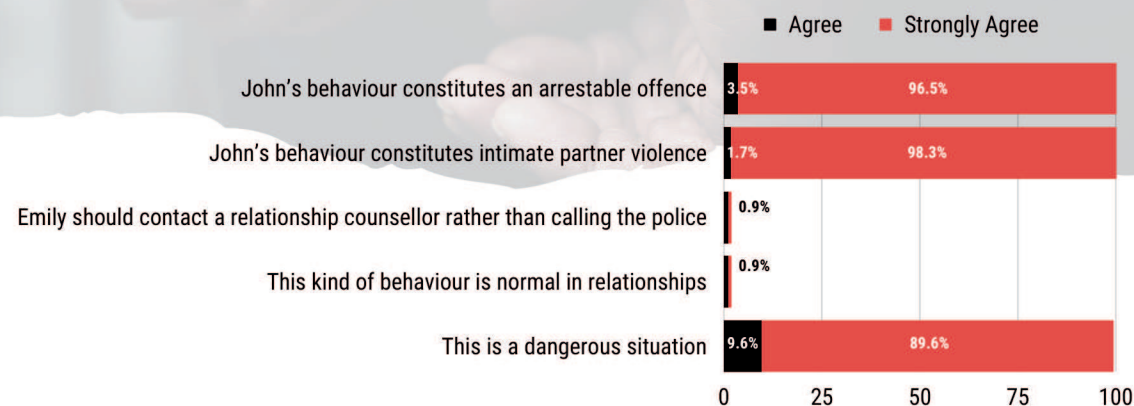
Those reading the **non-physical violence** scenario (93) were divided between agree (33%) and strongly agree (57.3%) (Chart 6). We can see that physical violence prompts a much stronger perception that John's behaviour constitutes an arrestable offence. Similarly,

> **police officers do not necessarily see John's behaviour as IPV depending on if they are presented with the physical or non-physical violence scenario.**

All police officers reading the physical violence scenario agree (1.7%) or strongly agree (98.3%) that it constitutes IPV compared to those reading the non-physical violence scenario who strongly agree (67%).

Chart 7. Police perceptions towards the fictional scenarios: Non-Physical Violence (N=103)

Legend: ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Statement	Agree	Strongly Agree
John's behaviour constitutes an arrestable offence	33.0%	57.3%
John's behaviour constitutes intimate partner violence	28.2%	67.0%
Emily should contact a relationship counsellor rather than calling the police	0%	
This kind of behaviour is normal in relationships	0%	
This is a dangerous situation	30.1%	61.2%
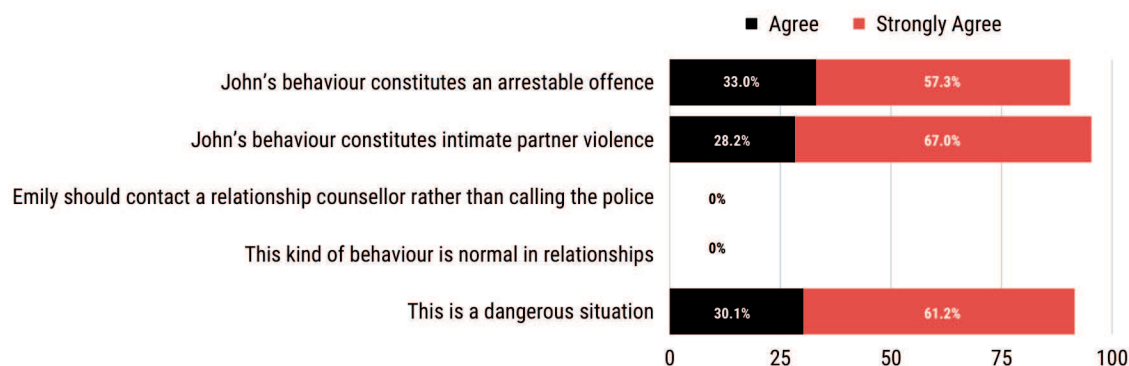
Those who were responding to the **non-physical violence** scenario (Chart 6) had mixed perceptions as more of them were leaning toward the "agree" category at 28.2% instead of "strongly agree". The physical violence scenario brings more certainty in determining it is a situation of IPV and that it is an arrestable behaviour **[2].** Are police officers perceiving the situation as dangerous? Police officers reading the physical violence scenario strongly agree (89.6%) that the situation is dangerous while 61.2% of police officers reading the non-physical scenario strongly agree.

Are police officers perceiving the situation as <u>dangerous</u>?

89.6% of police

reading the **physical violence** scenario *strongly agree* the situation is DANGEROUS

61.2% of police

reading the **non-physical violence** scenario *strongly agree* the situation is DANGEROUS
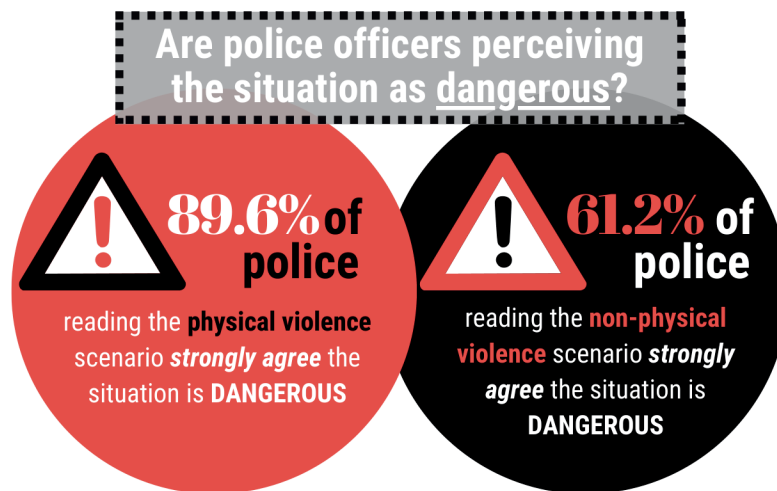
These numbers warrant questions about the identification of risk factors and whether police officers are considering the issue as an incident or a pattern of behaviours that has the potential of changing over time. The absence of physical violence may lead to thinking that the situation is under control with an intervention. Nonetheless, police officers considered that both scenarios were not normal behaviour in a relationship (92.2%).
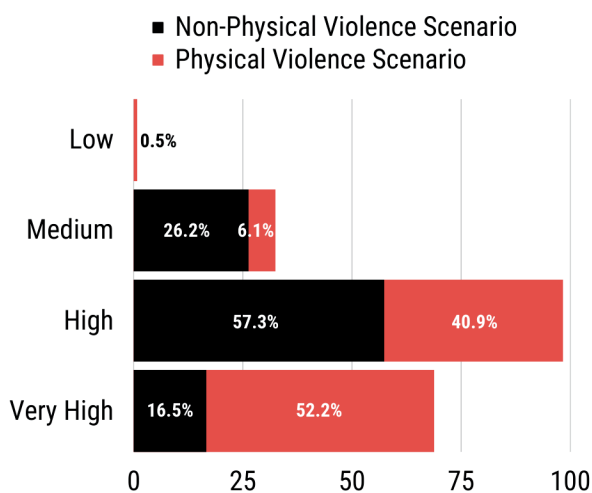
Chart 8. Level of Risk

- ■ Non-Physical Violence Scenario
- ■ Physical Violence Scenario

Low	0.5%
Medium	26.2% / 6.1%
High	57.3% / 40.9%
Very High	16.5% / 52.2%

(0, 25, 50, 75, 100)

It is in the assessment of the level of risk for Emily that the variation is the most perceptible among responses to the physical and non-physical violence scenarios. Approximately half **(52.2%)** of respondents assigned the physical violence scenario consider there is a **very high risk of violence** compared to **(16.5%)** of those who were assigned the non-physical violence scenario (Chart 8).

This finding demonstrates how non-physical violence does not constitute a very high risk in police officers' perspectives.

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Nonetheless, the perception of risk whether it is very high or high risk does not affect how police officers would act at the scene. For instance, over 90% of all respondents would separate the parties, offer information about services, make a report, or fill out a complaint and collect evidence (Chart 9).

Chart 9. Police officer actions in response to the incident

Legend: Non-Physical Violence, Physical Violence, Total

Action	Non-Physical Violence	Physical Violence	Total
Separate the parties	47.9%	52.9%	95.0%
Fill out a risk assessment checklist	45.3%	54.7%	63.5%
Offer information about services	45.9%	54.1%	95.0%
Make a report, or fill out a complaint	46.2%	53.8%	95.0%
Collect evidence	85.4%	94.8%	90.4%
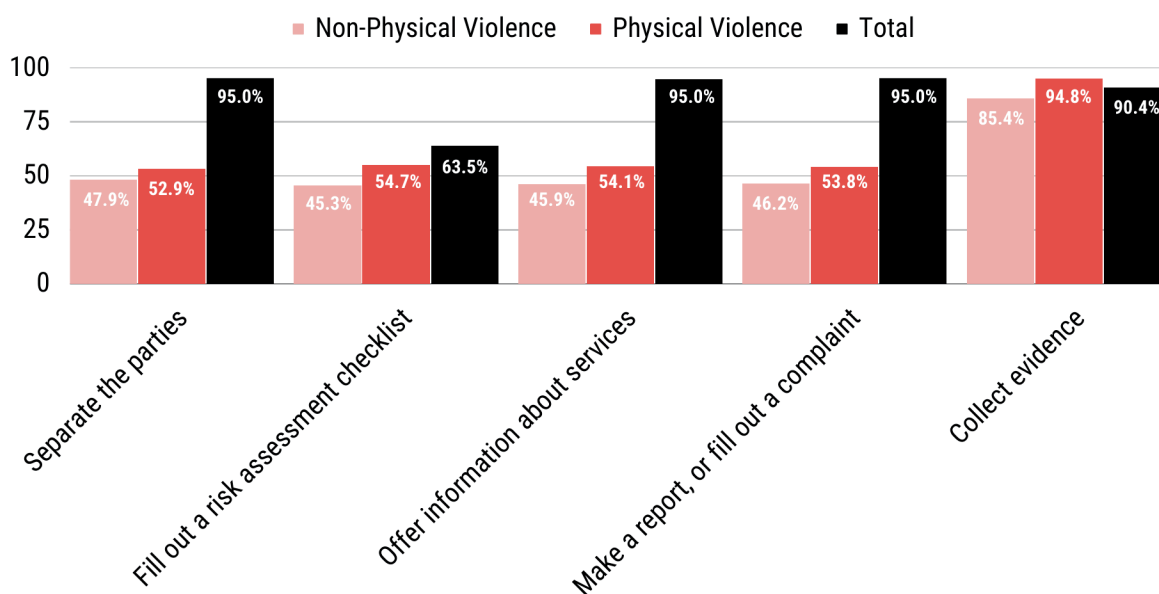
However, only 63.5% of all respondents would perform a risk assessment (Chart 9). **What it is telling us about perceptions of IPV situations is that whether it is a physical or non-physical violence scenario, respondents would perform similar actions.** Performing a risk assessment is also prompted by the level of risk perceived by police officers at scene. If there are signs of the risk of violence and evidence is perceptible, the assessment of risk may vary from low to very high risk.

In the case of police officers reading the physical violence scenario, the risk level was considered very high (52.2%) and high (40.9%) (Chart 8). The situation was not assessed similarly by police officers reading the non-physical violence scenario as only 16.5% considered the risk "very high" and "high" (57.3%) (Chart 8). **Here we can extrapolate the fact that the lack of physical violence in the non-physical scenario decreases the perceived level of risk.** The level of risk is also determined by considering the risk assessment tool used so police officer's familiar with assessments of physical and threat of physical violence may not see the potential of risk when these are absent.

HIGH RISK

After reading the fictional scenarios, police officers were asked to consider

who should be arrested:

ALL police officers assigned the physical violence scenario would arrest John compared to **(87.4%)** of those assigned the non-physical violence scenario. Approximately 13% of those assigned the non-physical violence scenario also considered they would not arrest either party. Considering the explanations provided by police officers, John was the primary/dominant aggressor and should be arrested. For all police officers in both scenarios there were no grounds for arresting and charging Emily.

John, Emily, **both**, or neither of them (Chart 10).

Chart 10. Protagonist to arrest from the scenarios

■ Non-Physical Violence ■ Physical Violence

Neither Emily nor John to be arrested	12.6%
Only John should be arrested	87.4% / 100%
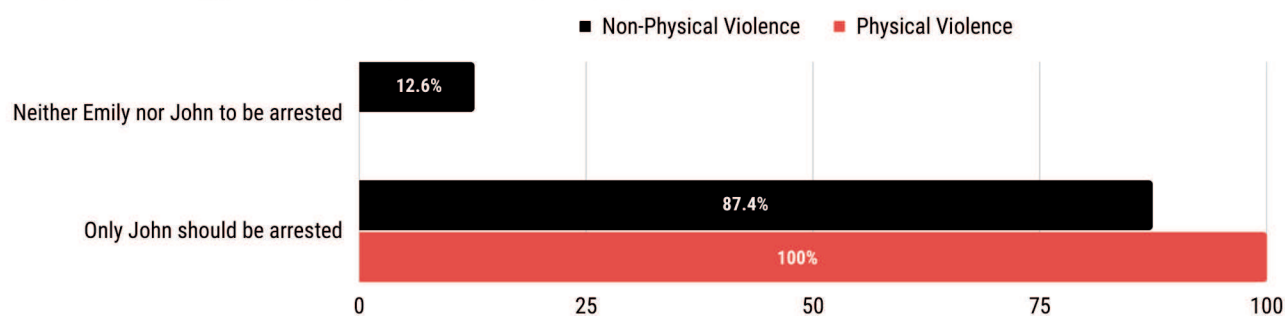
Across both scenarios, approximately half of police officers did not provide specific explanations for arresting John, while the other half of them added details justifying an arrest. **Police officers identified several criminal behaviours** such as: assault, break and enter, forcible confinement, harassment (stalking), and mischief that they flagged through the scenarios.

Criminal Behaviours Identified in Scenarios:

- Assault
- Break & Enter
- Forcible Confinement
- Harassment (Stalking)
- Mischief
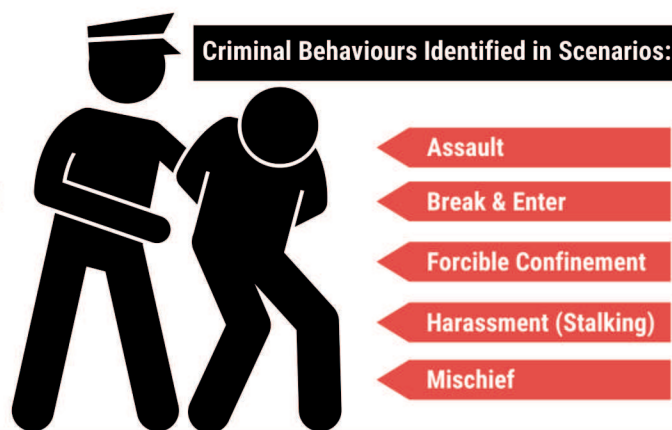
As anticipated, police officers who received the physical violence scenario most frequently considered "assault" an appropriate charge. This was expected, as this scenario contained a description that read: **"Emily said she tried to leave the house, but John grabbed her arm and flung her onto the couch. Then, she said, he struck her with the back of his hand".**

Surprisingly, a few police officers who received the **non-physical violence scenario** that did not contain these details also believed that there were **grounds for an assault charge**. Upon review, those who provided additional details felt John's attempts to prevent Emily from calling 9-1-1 constituted this offence. This content described that **"Emily said she had tried to pick up the phone to call 9-1-1 but John ripped the phone out of the wall".** One police officer described that *John has also assaulted Emily by forcibly removing the phone from her*, and another wrote *I arrest John for assault (forcibly removing the phone)*. It should be noted that the survey did not allow police officers to revisit previous questions; therefore, they were not able to review the scenario again after considering their responses. The scenario details did not state that Emily was holding the phone at the time, so it is possible that police officers made some assumptions or errors in recollection.

Police officers identified persistent *"text messages, phone calls, and showing up unannounced and unwelcome at both work and home"* **to Emily as harassment and this was the most common charge** highlighted by respondents across both scenarios: 27 of those responded to the physical violence scenario compared to 36 responding to the non-physical one. Even though this was one of the most common charges identified across both scenarios, there are still some differences noted. Half (50%) of the police officers who received the non-physical violence scenario recommended a charge of "criminal harassment" whereas only about a quarter (26%) of police officers in the latter group noted this charge, as both scenarios contained the same details and facts pertaining to John's tactics that are argued to constitute harassment.
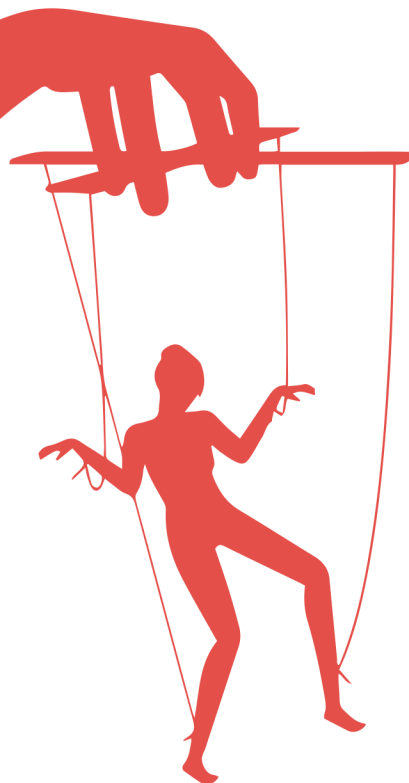
We also focused on comments highlighting **coercive controlling behaviours** that were perceived by police officers from the fictional violence scenarios. **Thirteen (13) police officers mentioned John's controlling behaviours were a concern.** The following behaviours were identified as serious enough to warrant charges for criminal harassment and further investigation:

control, isolation and intimidation.

One police officer responding to the non-physical violence scenario brought up that: *All the elements of control: unannounced visits, "protect her from the other guys at work", insert SMS and FB, prevent her from phoning, he hit her, push her on the couch, threaten her with suicide.*

Another police officer emphasized that: *It's clear that Emily is trying to leave the relationship and John does not want it to end. John has demonstrated some very controlling and obsessive behaviours.*

Several police officers also considered that a charge of "forcible confinement" may be warranted; however, differed between scenarios. Seventeen police officers who received the physical violence scenario recommended this charge, yet only four who received the non-physical violence scenario. It is considered that this charge may primarily be attributed to some of the details of the physical violence scenario where it is described that John prevented Emily from leaving the house; however, one police officer also suggested that *…he attempted to confine Emily freedom by preventing her to call 911.* It appears that this was also considered by the police officers who received the non-physical violence scenario as one described that *he has committed forcible confinement by being in her house and taking the phone away when she attempts to call police.*
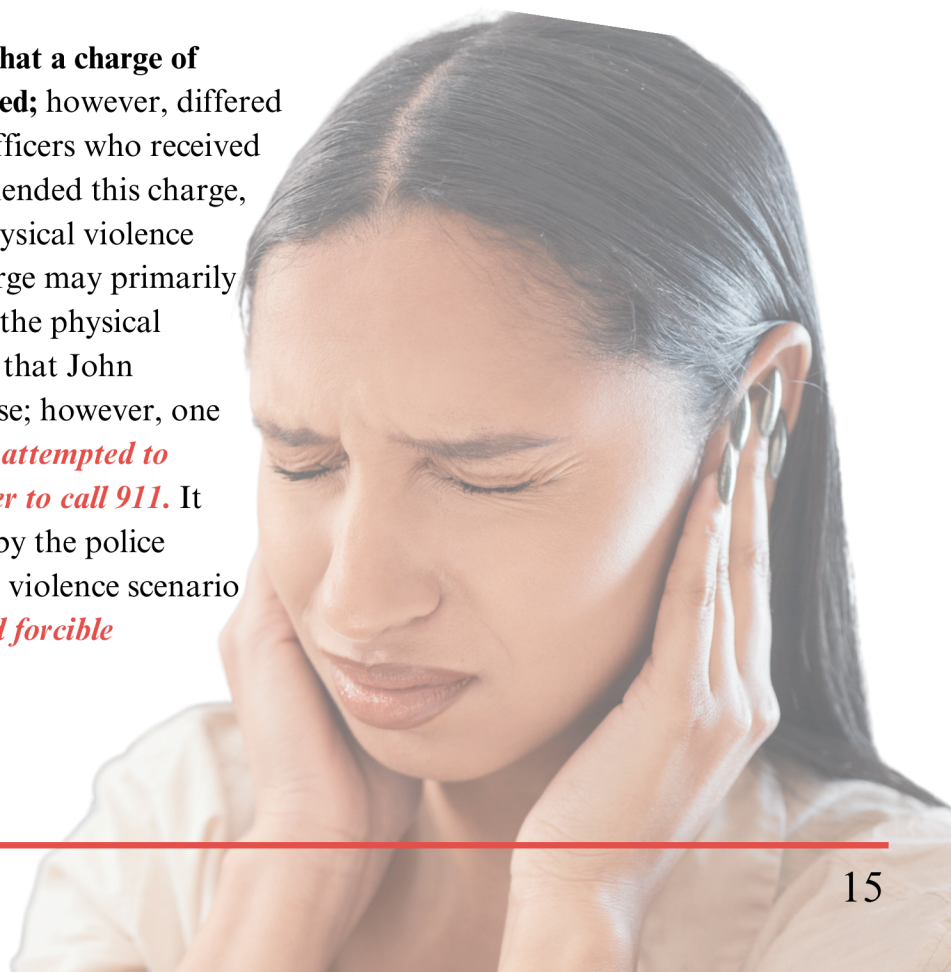
In both scenarios there was an explicit description of some form of damage in the kitchen: *Upon entering the kitchen, the officers noticed a phone on the floor. Emily says she had tried to pick up the phone to call 911, but John ripped the phone out of the wall.* Details pertaining to the environment led several police officers to consider **mischief charges.** Although it was available to all respondents, mischief was identified more among those responding to the non-physical violence scenario. Twenty-five police officers (30%) who received the non-physical violence scenario determined this charge was appropriate, whereas only ten police officers (9%) who received the physical violence scenario felt the same.

All police officers, regardless of scenario, generally believed that there was enough evidence presented to lay charges identified in the *Criminal Code of Canada*. This is encouraging, however, **there still appears to be some emphasis on the recognition of physical violence.** Police officers are not limited to laying one charge if facts and information gathered provides evidence to lay other charges simultaneously. Police officers did often consider this, as 31% of the police officers who received the physical violence scenario recommended more than one charge, as well as 28% of police officers who received the non-physical violence scenario. However, even though it is logical that "assault" and "forcible confinement" were more commonly identified following the physical violence scenario as these details were eliminated from the non-physical violence scenario, facts that police officers attributed to "criminal harassment" and "mischief" were identical across both, yet not recommended at the same rates.

3. Risk Factors Associated with IPV

Officers were instructed to consider 36 <u>known</u> **risk factors for intimate partner violence**, and then rate each in terms of their opinions of importance for evaluating level of risk or harm the victim may face in the future. The responses were based on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from **"not at all important"** to **"extremely important"**. For the purpose of this study, responses were collapsed so that "very important" and "extremely important" were coded as "1" and all others coded as "0". **Overall, officers considered that many of the risk factors would be important to evaluate** (see Chart 11 below).

Chart 11. Officers who perceive each risk factor to be very/extremely important

#	Risk Factor	Percentage
1	Using a weapon or threatening to use a weapon	97.0%
2 (tie)	Strangulation/choking	95.9%
2 (tie)	Prior hostage taking or forcible confinement	95.9%
4	Sexual assault	91.9%
5	Physical assault resulting in injury	91.4%
6	Making threats to kill	89.8%
7	Perpetrator's access to a firearm	88.3%
8	Victim isolated or has barriers to support	85.8%
9	Escalation of abuse	83.8%
10	Spying/stalking/harassing/threatening messages	82.7%
11	Criminal history for domestic or sexual violence	81.6%
12	Perpetrator's depression, mental health, or psychiatric problems	80.7%
13	Sexual jealousy by perpetrator	79.2%
14	Jealousy/controlling behaviour	74.6%
15	Obsessive behaviour displayed by perpetrator	71.9%
16	Victim's level of fear	68.0%
17	Perpetrator drug/alcohol abuse	67.0%
18	Bail/injunction/protection order	66.0%
19	Perpetrator's prior custodial sentence of 30 days or more	65.3%
20	Abuse of animal or family pet	64.5%
21 (tie)	Prior destruction of victim's property by perpetrator	62.9%
21 (tie)	Perpetrator threats of suicide	62.9%
23	History of violence outside of family by perpetrator	59.9%
24	Misogynistic attitudes by perpetrator	58.9%
25	Relationship breakdown/separation/divorce	55.6%
26	Prior suicide attempts by victim	50.0%
27	New partner in victim's life	48.5%
28	Conflict over child contact	42.6%
29	Perpetrator abused or witnessed IPV as a child	42.1%
30	Victim pregnant or recently had a baby	40.3%
31	Perpetrator witnessed suicidal behaviour in family of origin	30.5%
32	Perpetrator's unemployment	19.4%
33	Victim and perpetrator living common law	16.8%
34	Youth of couple	12.8%
35	Age disparity of couple	11.7%
36	Blended family (stepchildren)	8.2%

Officers were then asked to select five (5) of the 36 risk factors they considered were *essential* for evaluating risk, to observe how officers may focus on certain factors more than others, even though many of them may be initially considered to be important. Overall, the following five received the most votes:

1. *Using a weapon or threatening to use a weapon* **(59%)**,
2. *Strangulation/choking* **(53.5%)**,
3. *Escalation of abuse* **(47.5%)**,
4. *Making threats to kill* **(33%)**,
5. *Physical assault resulting in injury* **(31.5%)**.

Some of these risk factors overlapped with those ranked as highly important overall (Chart 11 above); however, some new factors rose to the top of the list when asked to narrow down to the top five, such as **escalation of abuse**, and **making threats to kill** (see Chart 12 below for full list).
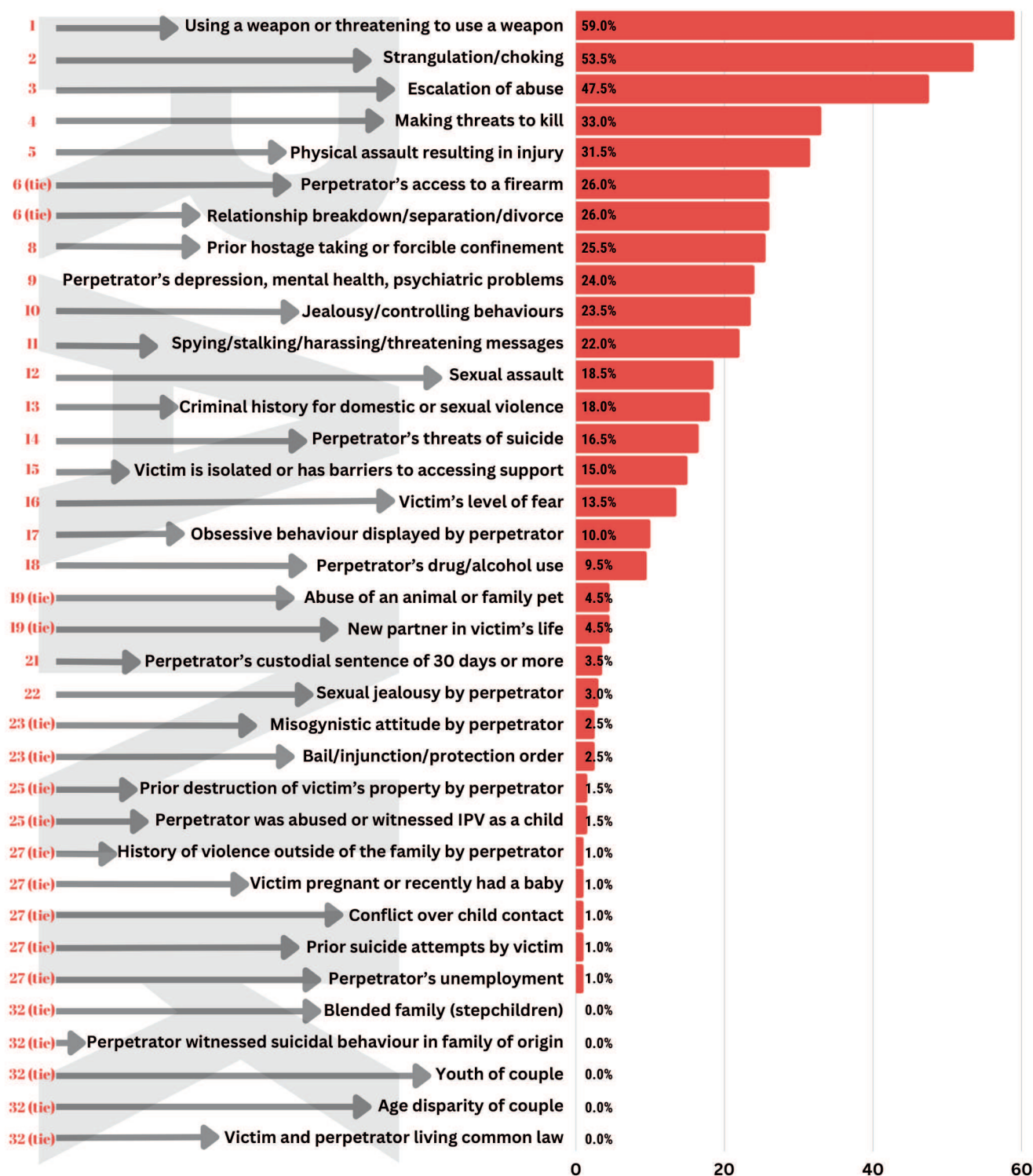
Officers were invited to provide any additional written comments they had about the risk factors. Overall, 22 officers chose to describe further opinions. Nine (9) officers ultimately identified that **context is important to consider**. Three (3) stated that *"anything that compromises the victim's safety is extremely important"*, *"ALL of them are important…"*, and *"the totality of all of these form a nexus of risk"*. Others also discussed ways in which **the accumulation of seemingly lower-level risk factors** could result in very dangerous scenarios: *"there is a context to each of the factors, which demonstrates the importance to be given to each of them. The mixture between them can be very explosive depending on the factors combined"*.

Six (6) officers also provided comments that they believed that **the list of 36 risk factors provided in the survey was not extensive enough** and did not include all possible risk factors. Suggestions for addition included **cultural** and **religious issues**, as well as **other controlling behaviours** such as *"… taking control of finances, holding property, holding passports, use of monitoring or GPS technology, checking in, not permitting partner to have friends or do things"*.

Such results clearly indicate that many police officers recognize that there are a broad range of risk factors prevalent in intimate partner violence situations; however, emphasis and attention on physical-violence related situations continues to prevail.

Chart 12. Percentage of officers who perceive each risk factor to be one of the top five *essential* factors

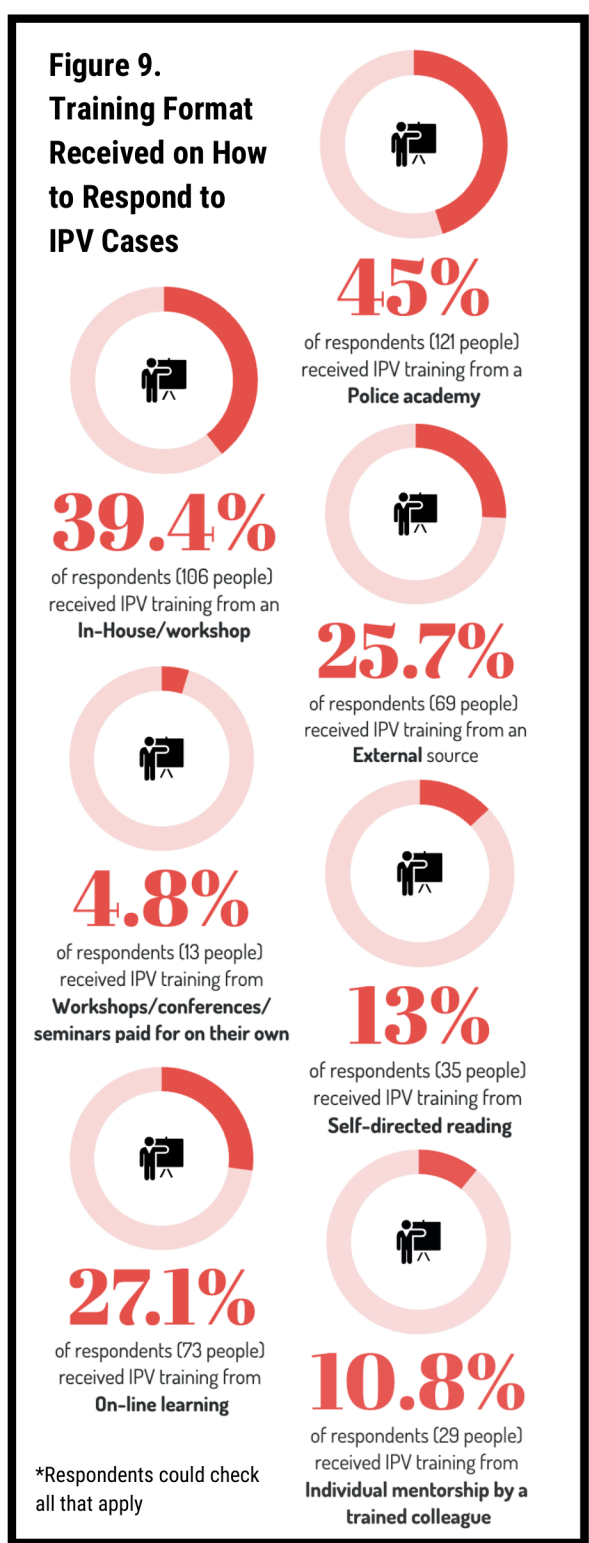| Rank	Risk factor	Percentage
1	Using a weapon or threatening to use a weapon	59.0%
2	Strangulation/choking	53.5%
3	Escalation of abuse	47.5%
4	Making threats to kill	33.0%
5	Physical assault resulting in injury	31.5%
6 (tie)	Perpetrator's access to a firearm	26.0%
6 (tie)	Relationship breakdown/separation/divorce	26.0%
8	Prior hostage taking or forcible confinement	25.5%
9	Perpetrator's depression, mental health, psychiatric problems	24.0%
10	Jealousy/controlling behaviours	23.5%
11	Spying/stalking/harassing/threatening messages	22.0%
12	Sexual assault	18.5%
13	Criminal history for domestic or sexual violence	18.0%
14	Perpetrator's threats of suicide	16.5%
15	Victim is isolated or has barriers to accessing support	15.0%
16	Victim's level of fear	13.5%
17	Obsessive behaviour displayed by perpetrator	10.0%
18	Perpetrator's drug/alcohol use	9.5%
19 (tie)	Abuse of an animal or family pet	4.5%
19 (tie)	New partner in victim's life	4.5%
21	Perpetrator's custodial sentence of 30 days or more	3.5%
22	Sexual jealousy by perpetrator	3.0%
23 (tie)	Misogynistic attitude by perpetrator	2.5%
23 (tie)	Bail/injunction/protection order	2.5%
25 (tie)	Prior destruction of victim's property by perpetrator	1.5%
25 (tie)	Perpetrator was abused or witnessed IPV as a child	1.5%
27 (tie)	History of violence outside of the family by perpetrator	1.0%
27 (tie)	Victim pregnant or recently had a baby	1.0%
27 (tie)	Conflict over child contact	1.0%
27 (tie)	Prior suicide attempts by victim	1.0%
27 (tie)	Perpetrator's unemployment	1.0%
32 (tie)	Blended family (stepchildren)	0.0%
32 (tie)	Perpetrator witnessed suicidal behaviour in family of origin	0.0%
32 (tie)	Youth of couple	0.0%
32 (tie)	Age disparity of couple	0.0%
32 (tie)	Victim and perpetrator living common law	0.0%

4. Training and Education about IPV

A series of questions were asked to appreciate how police officers are considering the importance of training on the issue. **Are police officers knowledgeable about the issue of IPV? Are they sufficiently trained to address its complexity?**

Training is an important aspect of quality response to IPV. Officers that are taking training sessions regularly have a better understanding of how the issue has evolved over time, as well as changes in policies and practices. Therefore, it is of interest to know when and from whom police officers have received training. It is also important to know if it is an on-going process or a one-time event in their career that police officers have been immersed in further training on the issue of IPV.

Figure 8. Receiving Formal Training on How to Respond to IPV Cases

Yes 72.0%	No 28.0%

Seventy-two percent of police officers have received formal training on how to respond to IPV cases (Figure 8) and 45% received training at a police academy (Figure 9). Formal training received was delivered in different formats during police officers' career with a mix of in person, online, in-house workshops or external as described in Figure 9, located to the right.

Figure 9. Training Format Received on How to Respond to IPV Cases

45% of respondents (121 people) received IPV training from a **Police academy**

39.4% of respondents (106 people) received IPV training from an **In-House/workshop**

25.7% of respondents (69 people) received IPV training from an **External** source

4.8% of respondents (13 people) received IPV training from **Workshops/conferences/seminars paid for on their own**

13% of respondents (35 people) received IPV training from **Self-directed reading**

27.1% of respondents (73 people) received IPV training from **On-line learning**

10.8% of respondents (29 people) received IPV training from **Individual mentorship by a trained colleague**

*Respondents could check all that apply

What do we mean by…

- **In-house workshops:** conference, /seminars organized by my policing organization that I have attended in person.
- **External workshops:** conference, seminars provided by experts in the field of intimate partner violence organized by third parties out of my organization or in collaboration with my organization that I have attended in person.
- **Workshops/conferences:** seminars that I have paid for on my own and used personal time to attend them in person.
- **Online learning:** over the internet via webinars, completion of e-learning modules, etc.

Several police officers (N=97) received **dedicated training in the past year about IPV** and this training too occurred through different formats: **in person**, **online**, **in-house workshops** or **external** as described in Figure 10 and Figure 11 below.

Figure 10. Receiving Dedicated Training About IPV in the Past Year (N=207)

3.4%
49.8%
46.9%

● Yes   ● No   ● Not sure
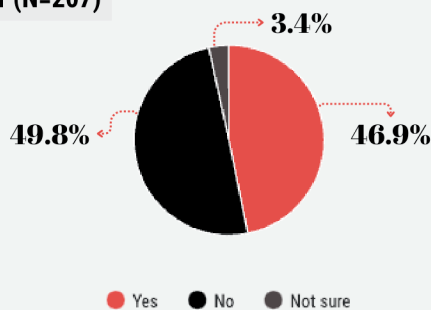
Figure 11. Format Training Received in the Past Year (N=207

7.4%
16.7%
15.6%
21.2%

● In person   ● On-line learning   ● In-house/workshop   ● External
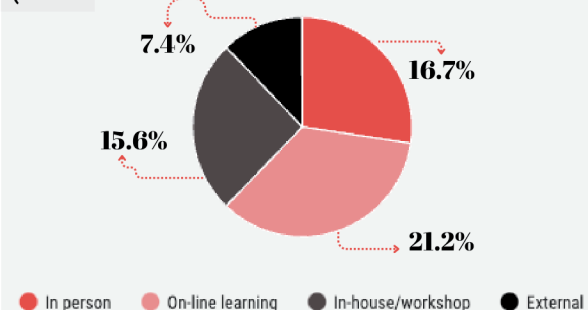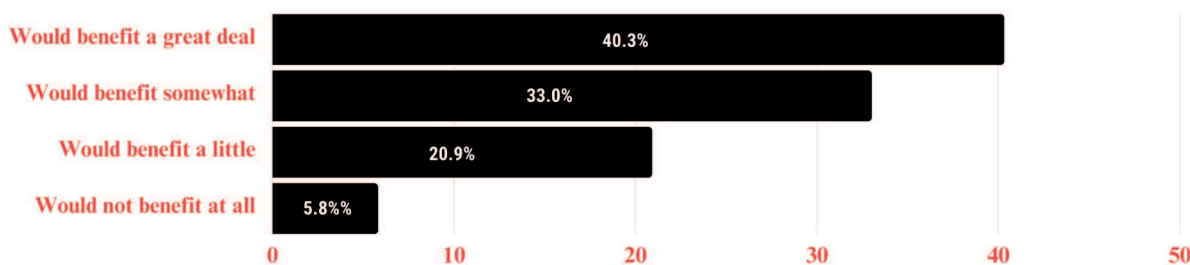
IPV is an issue evolving over time with new developments regarding the pattern of violence, policies and legislation changes, services and programs offered and ways to address the issue. However, training can be more sporadic than ongoing. The fact that professionals may also change positions and/or location can have an impact on the level of knowledge. **For some police officers, most training on IPV will happen in a police academy and to improve their understanding of the issue police officers must keep educating themselves.**

For **40.3%** of respondents, they considered that further training in IPV would be beneficial (Chart 13).

However, for **over 25%** of respondents they considered that further training would be of little to no benefit for them (Chart 13).

Chart 13. Further Training on IPV

Category	Percentage
Would benefit a great deal	40.3%
Would benefit somewhat	33.0%
Would benefit a little	20.9%
Would not benefit at all	5.8%%

Just prior to the time of the survey on October 5, 2020, **Bill C-247, An Act to amend the** *Criminal Code* **(controlling or coercive conduct) was submitted to the House of Commons of Canada.** This enactment aims to amend the *Criminal Code* to create an offence of engaging in controlling or coercive conduct that has a significant impact on the person towards whom the conduct is directed, including:

- **a fear of violence,**
- **a decline in their physical or mental health,**
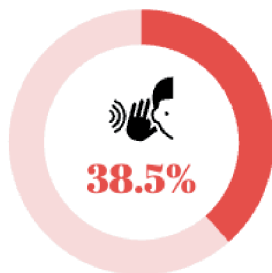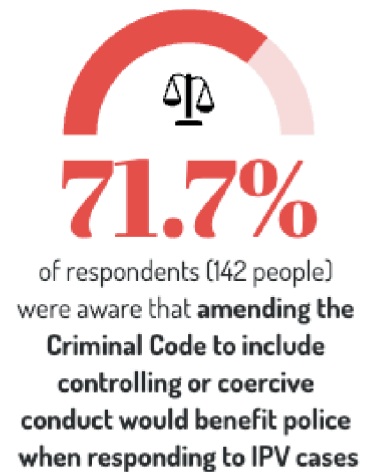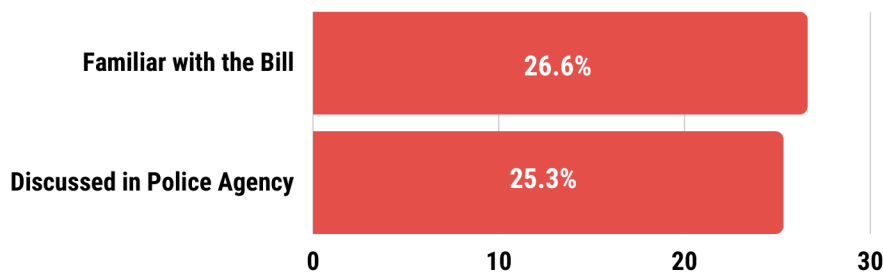- **and a substantial effect on their day-to-day activities.**

Since then, the replacement Bill C-202 was submitted to parliament following the dissolution of the government and election of the liberal government **[3]**.
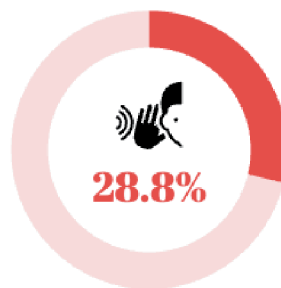

As we are interested in understanding how police officers perceived IPV and especially coercive control in their daily work responding to IPV cases, we wanted to know if police officers were aware of and what they perceived of the Bill before the House of Commons.

To our surprise, only **26.6%** of respondents **were familiar with Bill C-202** and **25.3%** have had discussions about the Bill in their police agency (Chart 14). It is surprising considering the fact that CACP has submitted a brief supporting the amendment of the *Criminal Code* and that there have been webinars organized on the issue.

Chart 14. Knowledge of Bill C-202 (An Act to Amend the *Criminal Code*) by Police Officers

Familiar with the Bill — 26.6%

Discussed in Police Agency — 25.3%

0   10   20   30

71.7%
of respondents (142 people) were aware that **amending the Criminal Code to include controlling or coercive conduct would benefit police when responding to IPV cases**

38.5%
of respondents (20 people) heard about Bill C-202 from Colleagues

28.8%
of respondents (15 people) heard about Bill C-202 from the Media
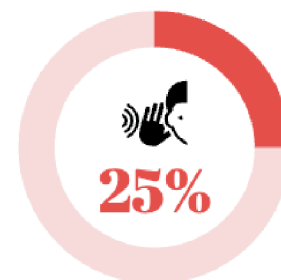
25%
of respondents (13 people) heard about Bill C-202 from the CACP internal email

Endnotes

[1] It should be noted that between 13 to 17 is the range for *missing data* throughout the report.

[2] However, we will see that police officers reading the non-physical violence scenario are more inclined to address other behaviours and come up with other charges compared to the other group.

[3] By the time this report is being written, Bill C-332 has been submitted to the House of Commons on May 18, 2023.