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## Reporting to the Police as a Response to Intimate Partner Violence\*

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**Abstract:** Research on police involvement in cases of intimate partner violence (IPV) focuses mainly on best intervention strategies and often neglects the key prerequisite of any intervention: the victim's decision to contact the police. This article concentrates on the circumstances that make IPV incidents more likely to be reported to the police, and it also analyses the reasons for victims' not reporting and for their distrust of the police. It makes use of data from the Czech part of the International Violence Against Women Survey, which allows us to analyse the reporting behaviour of 709 female victims of IPV. The reporting rate among them is very low – only 8%. Logistic regression models of reporting confirmed the high relevance of the features of the particular incident and revealed also several factors related to the history of violence in the relationship; on the other hand, the victim's resources were found to have no influence. Distrust of the police proved to be an important factor for not reporting to the police (29% of women), and further analysis of this factor suggested the possible occurrence of learned helplessness syndrome among some victims. An additional substantial outcome of this study is its highlighting of the importance of different forms of psychological abuse (threats vs. control) which have diverse effects on victims' reporting behaviour.

**Keywords:** intimate partner violence, victim reporting behaviour, International Violence Against Women Survey, Czech Republic

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### Introduction

Violence in an intimate relationship affects a great number of women regardless of their education, social status, ethnicity, or age. Recent survey data from the Czech Republic revealed that one-third of all adult women have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) sometime during their lives [Pikálková 2004]. Violence, once it occurs in the relationship, is likely to increase gradually, and external help is essential in order to prevent further incidents or in order to help a woman to leave her abusive partner [LaViolette and Barnett 2000]. Among formal sources of

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help, the police play an important role, since they can stop violence in progress, restrain or arrest offenders, and initialise criminal investigation against them.

Whereas the discussion on what sort of police intervention is most likely to protect the victim and deter the offender from further violence has become very intensive [e.g. Hoyle and Sanders 2000; Hirschel and Hutchison 2003], less attention is paid to the victim's decision to report or not to report the violent incident to the police. The latency of IPV is enormous; therefore, the understanding of the incentives and the constraints of reporting is important both for developing strategies to increase trust in the police and for choosing the kind of effective police intervention that can meet victims' wishes and prevent their secondary victimisation.

This article attempts to provide answers to three research questions: Which factors contribute to the fact that an IPV incident comes to the attention of the police? What are the main reasons for victims' not reporting to the police? Which factors, both individual and situational, are associated with victims' distrust of the police?

## **Background**

### *Police response to IPV cases*

The first IPV studies done in Western countries in the 1970s and the 1980s often criticised the police for not treating IPV offenders in the same way as offenders who commit similar acts outside the family circle [e.g. Dobash and Dobash 1979]. Police officers were often accused of sharing common negative stereotypes about abused women, of showing a lack of understanding, and of giving minimal support to the victims: they only seldom referred women to services for abused women, they often failed even to take a report of the incident, or they did not inform the victim about it, and it was rare that the offender was ever arrested [Kantor and Straus 1990]. Although the police treatment of IPV victims has become more sensitive in many countries, some negative attitudes and stereotypes are still pervasive among police officers [DeJong, Burgess-Proctor and Elis 2008].

Lively discussions have also been held about the best police intervention in IPV cases. A harsh approach to offenders, including pro-arrest and pro-prosecution policies, was initially advocated by feminist researchers and practitioners and was given strong support by the findings of the famous Minneapolis experiment, which produced evidence of the positive deterrent effect of arrest [Sherman and Berk 1984]. On these grounds, mandatory arrest policies were introduced in some parts of the United States. However, replication studies and further research frequently disconfirmed, or even contradicted, the original findings [e.g. Berk et al. 1992; Pate and Hamilton 1992; Sherman et al. 1992; Miller 2003]. Recently, some researchers have argued that victims should be empowered to make their own choice [Hoyle and Sanders 2000], and there is also some evidence that most vic-

tims are capable of evaluating their situation adequately [Hirschel and Hutchison 2003]. Further support for police showing a greater concern for victims' preferences is the finding that the victims' satisfaction with the police response is, not surprisingly, higher if it corresponds to their wishes [Apsler, Cummins and Carl 2003; Robinson and Stroshine 2005].

Recent research also shows that merely the reporting of an incident to the police significantly lowers the risk of further incidents, whereas an arrest does not have any additional deterrent effect. Therefore, the primary effort should be to encourage victims and third parties to report IPV incidents [Felson, Ackerman and Gallagher 2005]. Except for the deterrent effect of the mere involvement of the police, the official recording of incidents increases the odds of success in the case of later prosecution of the offender.

### *Reporting IPV to the police*

Studies vary considerably in their estimates of the proportion of IPV incidents that are reported to the police depending on how IPV is defined and measured and on the survey design. The importance of these issues can be demonstrated on the vastly different results of two American surveys: The National Family Violence Survey from 1985 found that 7% of IPV cases were reported to the police [Kantor and Straus 1990], whereas the National Crime Victimization Surveys conducted between 1993 and 1998 suggested that approximately 53% of IPV cases were reported [Rennison and Welchans 2000].

The incidents are usually reported by the victims themselves – ranging from two-thirds to three-quarters of cases [Berk and Loseke 1981; Bachman and Coker 1995; Apsler, Cummins and Carl 2003]. Generally, people who are aware of an IPV incident are not very willing to contact formal authorities. A recent Spanish survey revealed that people rarely feel that reporting to the police is an appropriate reaction to witnessing an IPV incident and they largely prefer informal mediation. Moreover, the odds of reporting to the police were higher only for those who evaluated the incident as more severe and also felt a greater sense of personal responsibility to act [Gracia, García and Lila 2009]. In addition, another Spanish survey showed that the majority (74%) of people who became aware of an IPV incident did not report it [Gracia and Herrero 2006].

Previous research has shown that the factors associated with reporting IPV incidents to the police are not stable. Among the factors related to the actual violent situation, the severity of the violence and, even more so, often the severity of the injury are frequently associated with reporting to the police [Bachman and Coker 1995; Thompson and Kingree 2006]. On the other hand, sexual violence is less likely to be reported than physical assaults, even though the former is often perceived as more serious by the victims [Felson and Paré 2005]. The importance of the subjective perception of the incident by the victim for the decision to call the police has also been confirmed – victims who feared that their life was in dan-

ger were more likely to report the incident [Thompson and Kingree 2006] – and the victim's belief that the incident was a crime was the most frequent reason for calling the police in the study by Felson and his colleagues [2002]. In addition, a positive association was sometimes found with the partner's alcohol consumption before the incident (in Kantor and Straus [1990] and Hutchinson [2003], but not in Thompson and Kingree [2006]).

The history and frequency of violence in the relationship is usually found to increase the possibility of reporting to the police [Gelles 1976; Bowker 1986; Thompson and Kingree 2006], except in Bachman and Coker [1995], who suggested that the likelihood of reporting increases with the first incident in the relationship, a result which concurs with the hypothesis of 'Battered Woman Syndrome' formulated by Walker [1984].<sup>1</sup> In addition, severe psychological abuse increases women's reporting [Bonomi et al. 2006]. Children's exposure to violence also significantly contributes to contacting the police [Ammar et al. 2005], as does frequent alcohol abuse by the partner [Hutchinson 2003].

Variables related to the socio-demographic background of victims are frequently referred to as their 'resources' (e.g. a woman's age, education, or employment status). A study by Gelles [1976] revealed that, whereas victims with high resources are more likely to seek outside help, the opposite applies in the case of reporting to the police: low resources (low occupational status, low education) increase the reporting rate. Gelles concludes that this finding 'is consistent with the popular assumption that the poor man's social worker is the police officer' [1976: 665]. However, his findings were based on a very limited sample, and further research has not always confirmed them; for instance, a study by Johnson [1990] found no association with any resources. In another piece of research, unemployment of either of the partners lowered the possibility of police contact [Kantor and Straus 1990], and ethnicity proved to be an important factor in some studies from the United States – white women called the police less often than non-white women in studies by Bachman and Coker [1995] and by Thompson and Kingree [2006] – but it had no effect in the research carried out by Bonomi and her colleagues [2006]. Usually, no relationship is found for marital status, education, or age [Bachman and Coker 1995; Bonomi et al. 2006; Thompson and Kingree 2006].

### *Barriers to seeking police help*

IPV victims indicate a large range of motives that prevent them from or make them reluctant to seek help from the police. Using the classification proposed by Wolf and her colleagues [2003], which was derived from focus groups with abused women, the factors that prevent victims from calling the police can be di-

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<sup>1</sup> A similar result was found by Ammar and her colleagues [Ammar et al. 2005], who, however, focused solely on immigrant women in the US.

vided into three groups: (1) situational and personal factors; (2) fear and negative experience with police response; and (3) fear of possible repercussions.

*Situational and personal factors.* The most frequently cited reasons for not reporting IPV to the police are concerns about privacy – women do not want anybody to know about the incident, feel embarrassed, and some do not want to get their partners in trouble with the police. A tendency to minimise the seriousness of the incident is also common [Kantor and Straus 1990; Fleury et al. 1998; Rennison and Welchans 2000; Felson et al. 2002]. Another related factor is women's belief that they must have some kind of evidence – for instance, visible injuries – that could prove to the police that they had been abused. On the other hand, injuries to private parts of the body are difficult to talk about, especially with male officers [Wolf et al. 2003]. Some victims also claim that they were physically prevented from calling the police by the offender during the incident [Fleury et al. 1998]. However, discouragement from reporting the offence later is related more to being afraid of the offender or to fears of reprisal from the offender, which is discussed below.

*Fear and negative experience with police response.* Negative experience with previous police intervention or a victim's belief that the police do not take IPV cases seriously enough or have no means of providing help are factors that have also been observed in a number of studies (e.g. 64% of women in Fleury et al. [1998]). On the other hand, a study by Felson and his colleagues [Felson et al. 2002] unexpectedly revealed that the abused women believed that police officers view domestic violence incidents as more serious than other offences. This finding may suggest that, at least in the US, the prevailing harsh approach to IPV offenders by the police is already being reflected in the opinions of the general public. Finally, some victims have voiced the fear that police officers, instead of arresting the offender, might make a double arrest [Wolf et al. 2003].

*Fear of possible repercussions.* Another reason for not reporting to the police and for not seeking help in general, although not mentioned so frequently by victims (up to 26%), is their fear of the offender and reprisals from him if they do report [Fleury et al. 1998; Rennison and Welchans 2000; Felson et al. 2002]. Last but not least, some women, especially from ethnic minorities, also expressed the fear that police officers would inform social workers about violence in the family, and they might attempt to take the woman's children away from her [Wolf et al. 2003].

### *An overview of the IPV situation in the Czech Republic*

The discussion of domestic violence that was initiated by women's emancipation movements in Western countries in the 1970s was largely ignored in the Czech Republic, which suffered under the oppression of the Soviet Union. Even after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, it took almost a decade to draw attention to this topic and to open up a public discussion of domestic violence. The

role of local NGOs should be appreciated in these efforts. It took even longer for the first amendments to Czech legislation on domestic violence to be passed, and the crucial acts were only introduced in 2004 and 2007.<sup>2</sup> The latter act gives police officers the authority – under certain conditions – to restrain a domestic violence offender from the house for ten days, even without the consent of the victim. During this period, the victim is offered the chance to seek help from a specialised intervention centre and can petition for a longer restraining order. This strategy represents a less harsh approach to IPV than the mandatory arrest policy, which would have little political and public support in the Czech Republic.<sup>3</sup> Despite the fact that restraining orders are often violated, they are still considered to be an effective measure in reducing the number of re-offences [Jordan 2004].

Czech social scientists only began to take an interest in domestic violence at the very end of the 20th century. The first sociological research projects to include sections on domestic violence were two studies of safety risks carried out by UNIVERSITAS agency for the Ministry of Interior in 1999 and 2001. The first representative research study that concentrated exclusively on domestic violence was conducted by STEM, a market and social research agency, in 2001 and was successfully repeated in 2006 [STEM 2006]. Research directed at particular issues of domestic violence also appeared quickly, focusing on violence against women (IVAWS study [Pikálková 2004]), against men, and against the elderly [Buriánek and Kovařík 2006].

The results of these studies unequivocally showed that the extent of IPV against women is similar to or even higher than that observed in other countries [Johnson, Ollus and Nevala 2008] and that the issue definitely requires attention – the lifetime prevalence rate of IPV ranged from 13% to 38%, depending on the definition of ‘violence’ and the research design [Pikálková 2004: 40, 49; STEM 2006]. Moreover, tolerance of less severe forms of physical violence among partners is quite high among Czech adults [Vymětalová 2001], and some stereotypes and myths about domestic violence persist [STEM 2006]. The IVAWS study (described below) is the only representative study in the Czech Republic that also deals with the reporting of IPV incidents to the police. It has revealed that only a small proportion (8%) of IPV incidents comes to the attention of the police and victims’ satisfaction with police intervention is very low: almost 60% of women were dissatisfied or even very dissatisfied with the police response to their incident [Pikálková 2004: 67–73].

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<sup>2</sup> A new section of the Czech Criminal Code (in effect from 2004), Section 215a, introduces the crime of ‘maltreatment of a person living in a shared flat or house’. Another long-expected change came with Act No. 135/2006 Coll. (in effect from 2007), which empowers police officers to restrain the perpetrator of domestic violence from the shared flat or house for ten days.

<sup>3</sup> Although public awareness of IPV has increased in the last decade, there is still a significant part of Czech society that takes a traditional view of IPV and is likely to oppose radical police intervention in these cases [STEM 2006].

## Methods

### *Sample*

The data used in this study come from the Czech part of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) that was conducted in 2003 [Pikálková 2004]. This victimisation survey was designed by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control (HEUNI), and Statistics Canada, and the methodology was influenced by the design of the International Crime Victim Survey. The main focus was the prevalence and incidence rates of the victimisation of women by men – not only by their partners, but also by friends, acquaintances, and strangers – and at the features of the most recent incidents. In the Czech Republic, a two-stage random sample design was applied: first, households were randomly selected, and second, one woman over the age of 18 was randomly selected from each household. Face-to-face interviews were carried out by female interviewers who had received special training. Ultimately, 1980 women participated in the survey, and out of them, 746 (38%) admitted to having ever experienced an IPV incident with their current or previous partner [Pikálková 2004].

The subset used in the analyses below is made up of women who were willing to give detailed information about the most recent IPV incident they had experienced (714 women). Those who failed to answer the question about reporting to the police were omitted from the analysis (five women). In total, 709 cases were included. An ‘incident of violence’ was defined as any act of physical or sexual violence, including threats of physical violence.<sup>4</sup> The questionnaire also included a set of questions about the women’s current and/or previous violent partners. Since it was possible to link the described violent incidents to the partners who had committed them, we have several characteristics of the offenders as well.

### *Measures*

This section gives a description of the variables used in the analyses below. First, I will focus on the relationship between the fact of the incident coming to the attention of the police and the various circumstances surrounding this event, which can be divided into three groups: incident-related measures, a history of violence in the relationship and associated measures, and the woman’s resources. In the second part of the analysis, I will focus on the various reasons for not reporting IPV to the police and distrust of the police.

*IPV incidents reported to the police.* The dependent variable measuring whether the incident was reported to the police is constructed from answers to the ques-

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<sup>4</sup> A modified Conflict Tactics Scale [Straus 1979] was used to assess the extent of physical violence.

tion: 'Did you or somebody else report this incident to the police?' Unfortunately, the IVAWS survey did not ask who exactly did the reporting. Although in the great majority of cases the incident is reported by the victims themselves (approximately three-quarters of cases) or by someone close to them on their behalf [Bachman and Coker 1995; Apsler, Cummins and Carl 2003], it is still possible that some of the incidents were reported by third parties without the victim's knowledge or consent.<sup>5</sup>

*Incident-related measures.* Several relevant measures related to both the objective and subjective facets of the most recent occurrence of violence were employed to describe the incident. Women who answered the question 'Thinking of the most recent incidents, what exactly happened during the incident?' with one of the following options, 'kicking or biting', 'hitting with a fist', 'strangling', 'trying to suffocate or drown her', 'burning or scalding her on purpose', 'used or threatened to use a knife or gun', were considered to have suffered severe physical violence (less severe forms of physical violence included 'pushing, grabbing, twisting her arm or pulling her hair', 'throwing or hitting her with something', and 'threatening to hurt her physically'). A variable measuring severe sexual violence was coded as 1 if either 'forced sexual intercourse' or 'forced sexual activity with someone else' was mentioned, otherwise the coding was 0. The occurrence of severe physical injury was assessed by asking whether the sustained injuries were so bad that the woman needed medical care (even if she did not get it).

In addition, two dichotomous variables were used to assess the subjective perception of the incident by the victim: the perceived seriousness of the situation ('very serious' × 'somewhat or not very serious', 'don't know/don't remember') and the victim's perception of the legal status of the incident (the incident 'was a crime' × 'wrong but not a crime', 'something that just happens', 'don't know/don't remember').<sup>6</sup> Finally, a binary variable measuring the offender's alcohol and/or drug consumption before the incident was also included.

*The history of violence measures.* Information on the extent of violence in the relationship and on several associated negative phenomena can also be obtained from IVAWS. The design of the questionnaire allows us to reconstruct the incidence of IPV incidents in the relationship; however, the pieces of information were not always complete.<sup>7</sup> The outcome variable measuring the history of physi-

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<sup>5</sup> Further in the text, references to this variable as 'reporting to the police' do not necessarily mean the victim herself reported it to the police.

<sup>6</sup> For these two variables the category 'don't know/don't remember' is coded like the 'less serious' category, so that the analysis does not suffer from a considerable loss of cases. However, if the woman did not answer the question at all, the case was excluded. The decision to proceed this way is based on the assumption that if the victim does not remember the incident too well, it is likely that she did not perceive it as too 'serious'. All the analyses were re-run for the dataset in which these answers are treated as missing values and no considerable change in the results was revealed.

<sup>7</sup> An extensive set of questions measuring the lifetime incidence of various forms of physi-



cal or sexual violence in the relationship is coded as 1 only if it is certain that at least five incidents preceded the most recent one.

The extent of psychological abuse by the partner was measured with a set of thirteen questions inquiring about different forms of abusive behaviour and their frequency, ranging from never occurred (1) to always (4). Psychological abuse was further divided into two dimensions: (1) abuse oriented towards controlling the woman, such as stalking, jealousy of other men, jealousy of her outside activities, limiting her social contacts, verbal abuse, persistent suspicion of infidelity, and an effort to control all her activities; and (2) abuse based on threats and aggression, such as threats to harm her or to harm the children or people close to the victim, threats by the offender to kill himself or the woman, threats to hurt the woman or her children if she leaves him, and damage of property.<sup>8</sup> The indicators of psychological abuse are constructed as weighted means of non-missing items – only those women who gave answers to more than half of the questions are included.

Other variables related to the circumstances of the partner's aggressive behaviour and, therefore, possibly associated with reporting the incident to the police are whether the children ever witnessed the violent incidents (yes/no) and the partner's alcohol abuse; the partner was considered to abuse alcohol if the woman reported that he was drunk at least once a week. The last indicator assessing the partner's aggressive behaviour in general was measured by a positive answer to the question whether the partner had ever been in trouble with the police because of his violent behaviour outside the family (yes/no). The category 'don't know/don't remember' is treated as a negative answer.

*The victim's resources.* The design of the IVAWS questionnaire unfortunately does not allow us to reconstruct all the desirable indicators measuring a victim's resources. For instance, a victim's age and employment status at the time the incident occurred cannot be obtained. Nevertheless, several resource variables could be included in the analysis: a woman's marital status at the time of the incident (married × not married), education level (basic/vocational school × high school diploma × university degree), and nationality (Czech × other nationality). In addition, information about whether children were living with the woman at the time of the incident can also be obtained. However, neither the number nor the age of these children was measured.

*Current versus previous partner.* The IPV incidents included in this study were perpetrated by either current or previous partners. Since the position of the inci-

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cal and sexual abuse by different offenders was included at the beginning of the interview. This section was unfortunately rather difficult to follow for both respondents and interviewers.

<sup>8</sup> The plausibility of the division was confirmed by factor analysis; a similar result was also reached in Buriánek [2004]. The reliability of both scales is satisfactory: Cronbach's alpha reached 0.90 for the control scale and 0.81 for the threats/aggression scale.

dents by previous partners is not random – they were definitely the last violent incidents before the relationship broke up – they might have different characteristics compared to incidents by current partners. For instance, the severity of violence in an abusive relationship tends gradually to increase [Walker 1984]. Therefore, the influence of this variable will be controlled in the analyses.

*Reasons for not reporting the incident to the police.* Women who did not report the incident to the police were asked about the reasons that contributed to this decision. Twelve possibilities were offered in the questionnaire, and out of them I focus on nine<sup>9</sup> in this analysis: (1) dealt with it herself / involved family or a friend; (2) didn't want anyone to know; (3) fear of offender / fear of reprisals; (4) too minor / not serious enough / never occurred to her before; (5) shame, embarrassment / thought it was her fault; (6) did not think the police would do anything; (7) did not think the police could do anything; (8) did not want the offender arrested / to get in trouble with the police; (9) would not be believed.

*Distrust of the police.* The last part of the analysis focuses on distrust of the police, which is constructed as a binary variable indicating whether the respondent agreed with any reason associated with distrust of the police ('did not think the police would do anything', 'did not think the police could do anything', or 'would not be believed').

### *Analytic strategy*

The analysis in this study proceeds in two steps: first, factors associated with reporting to the police are analysed, and, second, reasons for not calling the police given by victims are examined and the factors associated with distrust of the police are explored. In the first part, focused on reporting, the independent variables are divided into three groups: variables related directly to the violent incident, variables related to the history of violence in the relationship and related circumstances, and variables measuring the victim's resources. First, bivariate associations between all relevant independent variables and reporting to the police are examined.<sup>10</sup> Second, four separate models are tested using binary logistic regression while controlling for the influence of current/previous partner in all of them.

The logic behind the construction of the models is based on the fact that single incidents are reported to the police and, therefore, their characteristics are highly relevant to the act of contacting the police. The first model includes all the incident-related variables. Consequently, the second, baseline, model is created by removing the insignificant variables. The third model is constructed from the

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<sup>9</sup> Items 'part of my job' / 'goes with the job', 'reported to someone else', and 'other' are not considered in this analysis because of their low frequencies (less than 5%).

<sup>10</sup> The usual threshold of statistical significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) is used in this study.

baseline model by adding the history of violence variables and the fourth one by adding resources variables. This approach makes it possible to evaluate the unique contribution of these two groups of variables to reporting to the police while controlling for the influence of incident-based characteristics, and also to identify which variables increase the odds of reporting the most. The comparison of the models is based on a chi-square test of the difference in  $-2 \log$  likelihood values and the tests of regression coefficients are based on the Wald statistic.

In the second step of the analysis, reasons for not reporting the incident to the police are summarised and their bivariate associations with selected incident-related variables are examined. Finally, reasons indicating the victims' distrust of the police are further analysed. Previous research does not offer many hypotheses about which factors increase the odds of distrust of the police. Therefore, to explore this issue, forward stepwise regression is employed, in which all the independent variables from the first part and the remaining reasons for not reporting to the police are entered.

## **Results**

### *Reporting to the police*

The first objective of this study is to identify the factors associated with the fact of an IPV incident coming to the attention of the police. For this purpose, bivariate and multivariate analyses were conducted. Bivariate analysis (Table 1) shows that all incident-related variables are significantly associated with reporting to the police, except in the case of sexual violence. In addition, the influence of all the variables describing the history of violence by the partner is also statistically significant; on the other hand, among the indicators of a woman's resources, only the presence of children at home and non-Czech nationality significantly increase the possibility that the incident was reported.

The results of the multivariate analysis for the four proposed models are presented in Table 2. The first model includes variables describing the particular IPV incident. The odds of the incident coming to the attention of the police are significantly increased with the greater severity of physical violence, with the infliction of severe bodily injury, and with the victim's perception that the incident was a crime. The influence of sexual violence, the partner's alcohol or drug use before the incident, and the victim's perception of the seriousness of the situation did not reach the level of statistical significance. Consequently, the second model – the baseline model for comparison – presents the results when these three variables are excluded. The insignificant change in the  $-2 \log$  likelihood values indicates that the excluded variables do not contribute to the improvement of the model.

**Table 1. Dependent and independent variables: distributions and bivariate statistics – part one**

	Categories	N	Reported to the police <sup>a</sup> (%)	Effect size <sup>b</sup>
Incident reported to the police	1 = yes	59		
	0 = no	650		
Current partner	1 = yes	248	7.3	-0.03
	0 = no (previous)	459	8.9	
<b>Incident-related variables:</b>				
Physical violence	1 = severe	244	19.3	0.29*
	0 = less severe/none	465	2.6	
Sexual violence	1 = severe	94	12.8	0.06
	0 = less severe/none	615	7.6	
Physical injury	1 = severe (needed medical care)	107	36.4	0.43*
	0 = less severe/none	587	3.2	
Incident was a crime	1 = yes	146	29.5	0.38*
	0 = no	547	2.9	
Situation was very serious	1 = yes	184	20.1	0.25*
	0 = no	514	4.3	
Partner used alcohol/drugs	1 = yes	374	10.4	0.08*
	0 = no	332	6.0	

Source: International Violence Against Women Survey 2003.

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Valid percentages are reported.

<sup>b</sup> The strength of the relationship is based on a phi coefficient (for 2x2 tables) or Cramer's V (for larger tables). Both coefficients are chi-square based statistics and their significance is derived from the p-value of the chi-square test.

<sup>c</sup> The scale was here divided into three intervals with roughly equal numbers of cases.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .

The third model examines the influence of the history of violence while controlling for the incident-related variables. Only two of the history of violence variables reached the level of statistical significance: psychological abuse based on threats and aggression and the partner's troubles with the police for non-IPV incidents. The history of previous physical or sexual abuse increases the odds of reporting almost twofold, but the coefficient is not statistically significant. The substantive decrease in the  $-2 \log$  likelihood value compared to the second model

**Table 1. Dependent and independent variables: distributions and bivariate statistics – part two**

	Categories	N	Reported to the police <sup>a</sup> (%)	Effect size <sup>b</sup>
<b>History of violence:</b>				
5+ previous incidents	1 = yes	330	13.9	0.19*
	0 = no	379	3.4	
Psychological abuse – control <sup>c</sup>	1.00–1.50	232	3.9	0.15*
	1.51–2.25	215	7.0	
	2.26–4.00	247	13.4	
Psychological abuse – threats / aggression <sup>c</sup>	1.00–1.17	245	1.2	0.31*
	1.18–1.57	232	3.9	
	1.58–3.71	210	21.0	
In trouble with police for a non-IPV incident	1 = yes	128	24.2	0.27*
	0 = no	578	4.8	
Children witnessed IPV	1 = yes	302	14.2	0.18*
	0 = no	373	4.0	
Alcohol abuse	1 = yes	170	17.1	0.18*
	0 = no	525	5.5	
<b>Resources:</b>				
Education	2 = basic/vocational	284	8.1	0.06
	1 = high school diploma	306	9.8	
	0 = university degree	119	5.0	
Marital status	1 = married	573	9.1	0.06
	0 = not married	134	5.2	
Children	1 = children at home	489	9.8	0.04*
	0 = no children	198	5.1	
Non-Czech nationality	1 = non-Czech	42	19.0	0.10*
	0 = Czech	667	7.6	

**Table 2. Binary logistic regression of reporting to the police**

	<b>Incident</b>	<b>Incident (restricted)</b>	<b>History of violence</b>	<b>Resources</b>
Constant	-4.83(0.47)*	-4.63(0.41)*	-6.47(0.75)*	-5.44(0.76)*
Current partner	0.56(0.37)	0.60(0.37)	0.64(0.43)	0.72(0.39)
Physical violence	1.23(0.40)*	1.31(0.39)*	1.01(0.43)*	1.41(0.40)*
Sexual violence	0.00(0.41)			
Physical injury	1.65(0.36)*	1.73(0.36)*	1.63(0.39)*	1.73(0.38)*
Incident was a crime	1.56(0.36)*	1.65(0.36)*	1.43(0.39)*	1.67(0.37)*
Situation was very serious	0.45(0.35)			
Partner used alcohol/drugs	0.27(0.35)			
5+ previous incidents			0.58(0.45)	
Psychological abuse – control			-0.21(0.27)	
Psychological abuse – threats/aggression			1.12(0.43)*	
In trouble with the police for a non-IPV incident			0.77(0.37)*	
Children witnessed IPV			0.00(0.42)	
Alcohol abuse			-0.06(0.39)	
Marital status				0.43(0.55)
Children				-0.19(0.47)
Education – lower				0.16(0.56)
– high school				0.73(0.55)
Non-Czech nationality				1.06(0.57)
-2 log likelihood	263.77	267.41	219.59	255.76
$\chi^2$ difference (from 2nd model) <sup>a</sup>	1.95 (3)		21.41 (6)*	6.812 (5)
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	0.400	0.392	0.473	0.409
N	674	681	618	662

Notes: Reported are the regression coefficients with their standard errors in brackets; their significance is based on the Wald statistic.

<sup>a</sup> For computation of  $\chi^2$  difference, values of -2 log likelihood of the 'Incident (restricted) model' if restricted to the cases of the full model are used (not reported here). The corresponding degrees of freedom are indicated in the brackets.

\* p < 0.05.

indicates that the inclusion of the history of violence variables considerably improves the model. The last model assesses the impact of the resources variables. However, if the influence of incident variables is controlled for, none of the resources variables reaches the level of significance. Their minimal contribution to the prediction of reporting is also confirmed by the chi-square test of the  $-2$  log likelihood difference. Diagnostics for multicollinearity for the models (not presented here) reached sufficient values of tolerance indices (minimum was 0.59), suggesting no problems in this respect.

The explanatory power of the restricted incident-related model (the baseline model) – based on Nagelkerke  $R^2$  of 0.39 – is relatively high given the fact that only five independent variables are included in this model. The best result, however, is achieved by model 3, in which the inclusion of the history of violence variables increases the explained ‘variability’ in reporting by an additional 8% (Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.47$ ). As mentioned above, model 4 is not significantly better than baseline model 2. Therefore, the victim’s resources have no impact on reporting to the police when features of the IPV incident are statistically controlled for.

#### *Reasons for not reporting to the police*

The reasons given by IPV victims for not reporting the incident to the police are summarised in Table 3. The most frequently mentioned reason was that the woman had dealt with it herself or with the help of her family or friends (58%). Many victims tried to conceal the incident from others – they did not want anybody to know about it (34%) or felt bad about it (embarrassment, self-blame: 25%). One-quarter of women did not report the incident to the police because of their fear of the offender; on the other hand, one-quarter found their incident too minor to report it (these two groups were almost disjunctive). A relatively large group of women (29%) mentioned one or more items related to distrust of the police and their capability to effectively intervene, specifically: they did not think the police would do anything (24%) or could do anything (15%), and some women even feared that the police officers would not believe them (5%).

In the next step, bivariate associations between these reasons and the severity of physical and sexual abuse were analysed. Generally, severe violence – both physical and sexual – is associated with greater distrust of the police, fear of the offender, shame/self-blame, and an attempt to conceal the incident, and with less of a tendency to minimise the incident (see Table 3). No relationship was found between the severity of the incident and the items ‘dealt with it herself’ and ‘did not want the offender to get in trouble with the police’. Furthermore, victims of severe sexual abuse were more often worried that police officers would not believe them and they were more hesitant to reveal the incident to others.

Finally, women’s distrust of the police among those who did not report the

**Table 3. Reasons for not reporting to the police: descriptive and bivariate statistics**

	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	Physical abuse		Sexual abuse	
			Severe <i>%</i>	None/ less severe <i>%</i>	Severe <i>%</i>	None/ less severe <i>%</i>
1 Dealt with it herself / involved family or friend	375	58	57	58	51	59
2 Didn't want anyone to know	219	34	<b>44</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>31</b>
3 Fear of offender / fear of reprisals	172	26	<b>50</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>23</b>
4 Too minor / not serious enough / never occurred to her before	171	26	<b>10</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>28</b>
5 Shame, embarrassment / thought it was her fault	161	25	<b>36</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>23</b>
6 Did not think the police would do anything	157	24	<b>36</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>22</b>
7 Did not think the police could do anything	98	15	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>
8 Did not want offender arrested / in trouble with the police	95	15	13	15	20	14
9 Would not be believed	35	5	6	5	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Distrust of the police (6+7+9)</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>27</b>
<i>Number of cases</i>	650		197	453	82	568

Source: International Violence Against Women Survey 2003.

Notes: Significant differences are highlighted in bold ( $p < 0.05$ ).

IPV incident was further analysed. To explore which variables are associated with negative attitudes towards the police, a stepwise logistic regression was employed and the set of variables with the highest predictive values was identified (see Table 4). Out of the incident-related variables, only indicators measuring the victim's perception of the incident (seriousness of the situation and legal status of the incident) increase the odds of distrust of the police, and out of the history of violence variables, a single variable emerged – psychological abuse aimed at control. There is no resource variable in the model. Finally, two reasons that women gave for not reporting to the police also significantly increase the odds of distrust of the police: fear of the offender and shame/self-blame. This model has, however, relatively weak explanatory power (Nagelkerke  $R^2 = 0.23$ ).



**Table 4. Stepwise forward logistic regression of distrust of the police**

	Distrust of the police		
	B	S.E.	exp(B)
Constant	-2.40	0.30	0.091
Incident was a crime	0.92	0.26	2.520
Situation was very serious	0.88	0.23	2.404
Psychological abuse – control	0.36	0.14	1.428
Fear of offender / fear of reprisals	0.75	0.23	2.126
Shame, embarrassment / thought it was her fault	0.63	0.22	1.878
-2 log likelihood	594.83		
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.233		
<i>N</i>	569		

Notes: All coefficients are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and follow the order in which they were entered into the model.

## Discussion

The objective of this article was twofold: first, to analyse the features of IPV incidents that came to the attention of the police and, second, to examine victims' reasons for not reporting their incidents to the police and for their distrust of the police. The analysis of factors increasing the odds that the incident is reported to the police showed, in accordance with previous research, that factors related to the features of the particular incident were highly relevant. In conformity with the results of Bachman and Coker [1995], the relevance of the severity of the injuries was proven and shown to increase the odds of reporting, even more so than severe physical violence. Furthermore, the importance of the victim's subjective evaluation of the incident, especially her belief that the incident was a crime, was confirmed. On the other hand, the fact that severe sexual violence was found to have no influence may suggest that there is a certain distrust of the police in handling these cases (for similar results, see Felson and Paré [2005]). Interestingly, the partner's alcohol abuse, either before the incident, or in general, was found to have no impact. However, this finding is not exceptional (see Thompson and Kingree [2006] for a discussion of the differences in reporting between female and male IPV victims).

The history of abuse in the relationship was confirmed to be important, although only in the case of psychological abuse; the influence of previous direct physical or sexual violence was insignificant. However, this finding may in part be due to the fact that this particular indicator is imperfectly measured, so its importance should not be overestimated. On the other hand, the fact that more in-

tensive psychological abuse characterised by threats and aggression is associated with a higher reporting rate is an important finding. Furthermore, it is important to note that whereas psychological abuse characterised by threats and aggression greatly increases the odds of reporting, controlling behaviour by the partner decreases it, albeit insignificantly. Finally, contrary to the findings of other studies [e.g. Ammar et al. 2005], children's exposure to IPV has no effect on reporting in the Czech Republic.

Interestingly, the data revealed a victim's resources to have no impact on reporting. Despite the fact that not all relevant resources could be included in this analysis – for instance, the employment status and age of women at the time of the incident are missing – it seems that the influence of resources is rather weak, especially when compared to violence-related measures. This is not, however, an exceptional finding [see Johnson 1990].

Reasons given by IPV victims for not reporting the incident to the police mostly correspond to those found in other studies [Fleury et al. 1998; Felson et al. 2002]. Women often tried to keep the matter private and were likely to express fear of further victimisation by the offender or by the police. These reasons for not reporting were especially strong among women who had experienced severe physical or sexual violence. Distrust of the police was voiced by almost one-third of the women (29%) who did not report the incident. Unsurprisingly, this distrust was considerably higher among women who regarded the incident as a crime or as very serious, but nonetheless had not reported it. The other three factors that increased the odds of a victim's distrust of the police – psychological abuse based on control, embarrassment or self-blame, and fear of the offender – correspond to manifestations of the learned helplessness syndrome that some battered women suffer from according to Walker [1979, 1984], so this result provides some support for her theory. Interestingly, no other factors – either socio-demographic, or violence-related – seem to have an impact on distrust of the police among battered women.

A notable outcome of this study is its highlighting of the importance of psychological abuse and the dissection of its influence on reporting to the police. Psychological abuse constitutes an important part of IPV, but only a few studies on help-seeking have considered it in their analysis [e.g. Henning and Klesges 2002]. By breaking down psychological abuse into two dimensions – abuse based on control of the partner and abuse characterised by threats and aggression – it was possible to reveal their different impact on reporting. Whereas controlling behaviour by the partner contributes to the victim's distrust of the police, threats and indirect aggression lead to reporting to the police. This suggests that seemingly 'innocent' controlling behaviour by a partner, for instance, in the form of increased jealousy or limiting a woman's contact with her family, can have a devastating impact on a woman's ability to seek help. The importance of psychological abuse has evidently been largely undervalued in previous research and it definitely deserves more attention.

The findings of this study also suggest that IPV victims are less reluctant to report to the police if they have some kind of direct or indirect evidence of violence [cf. Wolf et al. 2003]. IPV incidents that resulted in severe injuries were more likely to be reported to the police, as were those incidents in which the perpetrator had already been in trouble with the police for aggressive behaviour unrelated to IPV. On the other hand, sexual violence in an intimate relationship still seems to be a taboo subject in Czech society. Severe sexual abuse made no difference to reporting behaviour, and, moreover, sexually abused women who did not report the incident were more likely to fear that the police would not believe them or would not help them.

In sum, the results confirmed the high importance of both the objective and subjective facets of the IPV incident for reporting to the police and highlighted the complex nature of psychological abuse, which should not be treated as a single concept in future research. The distrust of the police or effectiveness of police intervention proved to be an important reason for not reporting IPV incidents. There is no doubt that the intervention of Czech police in IPV cases is still far from perfect and victims' scepticism is often not groundless [see also Pikálková 2004]. However, the findings in this analysis revealed that distrust of the police may, in some cases, also be connected to the learned helplessness of abused women [Walker 1979, 1984] or their inadequate perception of IPV. Therefore, to increase the reporting rate of IPV incidents, not only is it necessary to improve the work and image of the police, but also there must be an increase in public awareness of domestic violence in general and of effective strategies of victim support.

Finally, some limitations of this study should be mentioned. The problem of limited sample size is inherent to all representative victimisation surveys – although the original sample was large ( $N = 1980$ ), its restriction to IPV victims cut it to one-third of its initial size, and, in addition, just a small proportion of incidents was reported to the police. The second problem concerns the design of the IVAWS survey. Although it was intended to enable an analysis of the reporting of IPV incidents to the police, several important indicators were not measured suitably and some were even not included. The measurement deficiencies might have had a negative effect on the indicator of the incidence of previous physical and sexual abuse in the relationship and on some variables describing the social situation of the victim. Last but not least, the results on reporting to the police should be accepted cautiously, given the lack of information about who exactly did the reporting and if it was done with the victim's consent. Despite the fact that several studies suggest that victims usually report to the police themselves [Berk and Loseke 1981; Bachman and Coker 1995; Apsler, Cummins and Carl 2003] and people who are aware of IPV rarely perceive reporting to the police as a preferable option [Gracia, García and Lila 2009], we cannot rule out the possibility that some IPV cases in our sample were reported without the victim's knowledge or against her will.

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