DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
INCIDENCE AND PREVALENCE STUDY

SEPTEMBER–DECEMBER 2005

Study conducted by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION
- Research Objectives ................................................................. 2
- Methodology ............................................................................... 2
- Definitions .................................................................................. 3

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- Overall ......................................................................................... 5
- Perception of Domestic Violence Problem in Utah ....................... 5
- Prevalence of Domestic Violence and Abuse ............................... 5
- Incidence of Specific Forms of Abuse ....................................... 6
- Perceived Barriers to Reporting Abuse ..................................... 8
- Actual Barriers to Reporting Abuse ........................................... 9
- Usage and Effectiveness of Resources ...................................... 9
- Experience with Civil Protective Orders .................................. 11
- Experience with Police ............................................................... 12
- Experience with Courts .............................................................. 13
- Experience with Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) ... 14
- Media Influence on Domestic Violence Problem ................. 14
- Conclusions ............................................................................... 15
- Contributors ............................................................................ 18
INTRODUCTION

Dan Jones & Associates, Inc., a full-service, public opinion, and market research firm located in Salt Lake City, Utah, was commissioned by the Utah Commission for Women and Families to conduct and compile a domestic violence incidence and prevalence study. The study was first conducted with 1,000 women across the state of Utah in 1997 and was repeated in 2005.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to measure the incidence and prevalence of domestic violence among Utah women, including: types of abuse, length of abuse, knowledge of abuse of others, number of abusive relationships, childhood abuse, child exposure to abuse, and the effects of abuse. Other research objectives are to:

- Assess women’s opinions regarding the seriousness of domestic violence in their communities.
- Evaluate usage and perceived effectiveness of specific resources (such as police, churches, and domestic violence shelters) in aiding victims of domestic violence.
- Identify actual and perceived barriers to reporting abuse.
- Analyze respondents’ experiences with civil protective orders, contacting the police regarding domestic violence situations, dealing with the courts, and receiving Temporary Aid for Needy Families from the Department of Workforce Services.
- Examine the media’s influence on domestic violence and determine which television stations to target with anti-domestic violence messages.
- Provide profiles of women most likely to be victims of domestic violence.

Methodology

Fieldwork: September–December, 2005

Universe: Females, Utah residents, age 18 and over

Sample Size: 1,000 interviews
Sample: RDD (Random Digit Dial) sample and telephone listings
Multiple callbacks
Interviews conducted during daytime and evening hours

Margin of Error: +/- 3.0% (on total data)

Questionnaire: Developed by Dan Jones & Associates in conjunction with the Utah
Commission for Women and Families
Both structured (multiple choice) and unstructured (open-end) questions used
Translated into Spanish by a professional translator

Survey Length: Average interview time 18 minutes

Note: Interviewers observed that the survey length increased the number of refusals and terminates.

Interviewers: Given the sensitive subject matter, interviewers were carefully briefed by
the project director on the research objectives and were thoroughly
trained to assure congruity in reciting questions and in recording
responses. All interviewers were female.
Bilingual interviewers conducted approximately 33 surveys in Spanish.

Survey results are included in the Detailed Charts section. Appendices include the
questionnaire with results (Appendix A), respondent comments (Appendix B), and demographic
cross-tabulations (Appendix C).

Definitions

Types of abuse as defined to respondents

Domestic Violence: Primarily, though not exclusively, a crime committed by men against
women including: a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors; psychological, sexual, and
physical abuse; behavior used by an individual to hurt, dominate, and control an intimate
partner.
Isolation: Someone controlling what you do, who you see and talk to; limiting outside involvement; or using jealousy to justify actions.

Coercion and Threats: Someone making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt you or other members of the household; threatening to leave, threatening to commit suicide, or making others do illegal things.

Intimidation: Someone making you afraid by using looks, actions, gestures; smashing things; destroying property; abusing pets; and/or displaying weapons.

Emotional Abuse: Someone putting you down, calling you names, making you think you’re crazy, playing mind games, humiliating you, and/or making you feel guilty.

Denying and Blaming: Someone making light of the abuse and not taking concerns about it seriously, saying the abuse didn’t happen, shifting responsibility for abusive behavior, and/or blaming you.

Using Children: Someone using your children to make you feel guilty about the children, using the children to relay messages; using visitation to harass you and/or threatening to take the children away.

Male Privilege: A male treating female household members like servants, making all the major decisions, acting like the master of the castle, and/or being the one to define men’s and women’s roles.

Economic Abuse: Someone preventing you from getting or keeping a job, making you ask for money, giving you an allowance that does not meet family needs, taking your money, and/or not letting you know about or have access to family income.

Physical Abuse: Someone pushing or shoving you; hitting, slugging, or socking you; and/or strangling you.

Sexual Abuse: Someone wanting you to do something sexual that you don’t want to do, intimately touching you when you don’t want to be touched, and/or forcing you to watch pornography or sex acts.

Victim Advocate: A specialized victim/witness counselor, with compassion, dedication, and good interpersonal skills, who acts as a liaison for victims of crime and their families.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Note: In the 2005 study, data for victims and non-victims was differentiated for comparison purposes. A respondent was designated as a “victim” if they indicated they had suffered any of the forms of abuse addressed in questions 4–37 (please refer to the DETAILED CHARTS and QUESTIONNAIRE WITH RESULTS in Appendix A for more detailed data). In total, three-eighths, or 369 of the 1000 respondents were identified as victims in the 2005 study. Significant differences between victims and non-victims are mentioned throughout the EXECUTIVE SUMMARY and noted by segment in the DETAILED CHARTS.

Overall

• There has been very little change—for the better or worse—in the incidence and prevalence of domestic violence and abuse in Utah since the 1997 study.

Perception of Domestic Violence Problem in Utah

• Domestic violence is still perceived as a serious problem in the state of Utah. As in 1997, six in seven (86%) women say that domestic violence is a problem in their communities.
  ⇒ As may be expected, victims (91%) are more inclined than non-victims to say that domestic violence is a “major problem.”

• Nearly two-thirds of women (63%)—victims and non-victims—believe that violence against women is increasing, which is unchanged from 1997. However, the number of women who believe that violence against women is remaining steady increased slightly in 2005 (1997: 25% and 2005: 29%).

Prevalence of Domestic Violence and Abuse

• Surprisingly, the percentage of women who indicate that their parents abused them doubled from 12% in 1997 to 24% in 2005. One in four (25%) witnessed domestic violence as a child, which is about the same as in 1997 (23%).
  ⇒ Victims are considerably more likely than non-victims to have been abused by their parents (36%) or to have witnessed domestic violence as a child (34%).

• Of note, the percentage of women who claim their children witness or hear verbal abuse declined from 21% in 1997 to 11% in 2005, and the percentage who say their children witness or hear physical abuse also dropped from 7% to 3%.
⇒ Perhaps not surprisingly, the children of victims are significantly more likely to have witnessed or heard verbal (22%) and physical abuse (7%).
⇒ Victims are also more likely to indicate that their children abuse them (overall: 4% and victims: 9%).

• Unchanged from 1997, one in nine (11%) women have considered harming themselves, and one in fourteen (7%) have attempted suicide.
  ⇒ Alarmingly, 22% of victims have considered harming themselves, and 12% have attempted suicide.
  ⇒ Ten percent of victims have injured another person while attempting to protect themselves.
  ⇒ Less than one in ten victims (6%) have ever become homeless as a result of domestic violence.

• Two in ten (21%) victims have been in more than one abusive relationship. Of these respondents, half (49%) indicate they have been in two relationships; 22% say three relationships; and 15% report four or more relationships. Twelve percent of victims are currently in a relationship where they are a victim of domestic violence.

• On the positive side, nearly three in four women (73%)—victims and non-victims—feel that if they told people about abuse in their family, people would believe them. In addition, nearly all (95%) believe there is help available for domestic violence if they needed it. These numbers are up slightly from 1997, 69% and 92%, respectively.
  ⇒ Still, 11% of victims say there are secrets withheld about domestic violence in their household.

**Incidence of Specific Forms of Abuse**

**Psychological Abuse**

Five types of psychological abuse have commonly been reported by Utah women. Of these, emotional abuse remains the most prevalent.
While emotional abuse remains the most common type of psychological abuse, the number of women having experienced this form of abuse decreased from 34% to 25%. The decreases were primarily among women who experience emotional abuse rarely (once a year or less) or occasionally (a few times a year). Seven percent of women suffer emotional abuse daily, weekly, or monthly.

These five forms of abuse are also those most frequently mentioned when women are asked about the experiences of their family members or friends.

⇒ Strikingly, seven in ten (70%) victims have experienced emotional abuse. Over three in ten victims have experienced denying and blaming (52%), male privilege (43%), isolation (39%), and intimidation (32%).

⇒ A significantly higher percentage of victims also admit that they have family members or friends who are victims of psychological abuse (i.e. emotional abuse—victims: 72% and non-victims: 39%).

It appears that most instances of psychological abuse are occurring rarely or occasionally (i.e. emotional abuse—overall: 17% and victims: 47%), as reported in 1997. However, the significant number of daily, weekly, and monthly instances (i.e. emotional abuse—overall: 7% and victims: 19%) should not be overlooked.
• Nine in ten victims of nearly all of the forms of psychological abuse addressed indicate that they have experienced these behaviors/abuse over their lifetimes or over the past few years (i.e. emotional abuse–victims: lifetime, 44%, past few years, 43%).

Physical Abuse
• There is a lower incidence of physical abuse than any of the forms of psychological abuse.
• Among all women, there are more reported experiences of pushing/shoving (5%) and hitting/slugging/socking (5%) than strangling (2%).
  ⇒ Eighteen percent of victims have experienced pushing/shoving, 15% have been hit/slugged/socked, and 6% have been strangled.
• Most instances of physical abuse are occurring once a year or less.
• As with psychological abuse, nine in ten victims of physical abuse indicate they have experienced these behaviors/abuse over their lifetimes or over the past few years (i.e. pushing and shoving–victims: lifetime, 39%, past few years, 53%).
• Again, victims tend to be significantly more aware of family members or friends who are victims of physical abuse (overall: 25% and victims: 36%).

Sexual Abuse
• Reflective of the physical abuse data, most instances of sexual abuse are occurring once a year or less (overall: 2% and victims: 6%). However, a woman is slightly more likely to have been sexually abused than to have been hit or strangled.
  ⇒ A slightly larger percentage of victims say they are sexually abused often (weekly) or frequently (daily) (victims: 3%) than the other forms of physical abuse.
• Nine in ten victims of sexual abuse indicate they have suffered this abuse over their lifetimes (40%) or over the past few years (51%).
• Again, victims tend to be significantly more aware of family members or friends who are victims of sexual abuse (overall: 15% and victims: 24%).

Perceived Barriers to Reporting Abuse
• As in 1997, nearly all of the 2005 respondents believe that fear about what the perpetrator will do to the woman and/or the children and hope that the perpetrator will change are the greatest barriers to reporting abuse for victims of domestic violence. The vast majority (over nine in ten) also say that an unwillingness to break up the family; not wanting the perpetrator
to go to jail; a fear of becoming homeless (not being able to return home); and feeling isolated and having no one to talk to are barriers to reporting abuse (see chart below for more detail).

- There were no significant differences between victims’ and non-victims’ perceptions of barriers to reporting abuse.

| Perceived Reasons Why Domestic Violence Victims Do Not Report Abuse (Total Data) |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| The victims fears what the perpetrator will do to her and/or the children. | 23%  | 29%  | 72%  | 66%  |
| The victim keeps hoping the perpetrator will change. | 29%  | 39%  | 67%  | 58%  |
| Victims are unwilling to break up the family. | 42%  | 42%  | 51%  | 51%  |
| Victims feel isolated and may have no one to talk to. | 44%  | 46%  | 48%  | 46%  |
| Victim is afraid of becoming homeless (not being able to return home). | N/A  | 50%  | N/A  | 43%  |
| Victim doesn’t want perpetrator to go to jail; just wants abuse to stop. | 40%  | 51%  | 55%  | 42%  |
| Victims don’t have enough money. | 43%  | 41%  | 30%  | 37%  |
| Victims have limited job skills. | 45%  | 45%  | 36%  | 37%  |
| Victim is afraid she won’t be believed. | N/A  | 52%  | N/A  | 37%  |
| Victims don’t know where to go for help. | 48%  | 50%  | 35%  | 33%  |
| The victim has a history of abuse in her family. | 50%  | 52%  | 34%  | 33%  |
| The victim expects abuse and, in fact, feels she deserves it. | 48%  | 57%  | 28%  | 23%  |
| Victim has a legal history and fears arrest if law enforcement responds. | N/A  | 47%  | N/A  | 15%  |
| The victim injured the perpetrator during the assault on her. | N/A  | 42%  | N/A  | 12%  |

- Actual Barriers to Reporting Abuse

- Fear of the abuser tops the list of actual barriers for over half (51%) of the victims when they needed help for domestic violence. Lack of financial resources/housing (41%) and lack of knowledge about available resources (37%) also pose significant barriers. Privacy/confidentiality issues (25%) and lack of child care (22%) are also concerns.

Usage and Effectiveness of Resources

- When asked, unaided, where they would turn to receive help for domestic violence, four in ten (40%) women say family, about the same as in 1997 (36%). Family was also the most frequently mentioned response among victims (32%). One in five (20%) respondents would contact the police/sheriff (victims: 24%), and one in six women (15%) indicate they would consult a bishop/clergy/church official (victims: 16%).

- While the sample sizes vary, it appears from the victims’ responses that the most used resources are considered to be the least effective in helping victims of domestic violence. Conversely, the least used resources are deemed the most effective by victims.
⇒ Domestic violence shelters (5.57), the Domestic Violence Link Line (5.55), victim advocates (5.03), and Rape Crisis Centers (4.86) are rated the most effective resources in helping victims of domestic violence by those who have used these resources. (Mean scores on a scale of 1–7, with 1 not effective at all, 4 neutral, and 7 very effective)

⇒ One-fourth (26%) of victims have contacted the police regarding domestic violence, making law enforcement the most used resource. However, victims who have contacted the police rate this resource as one of the least effective in helping victims of domestic violence (3.78).

⇒ Faith leaders/churches may be one exception. Nearly one-fourth (22%) of victims have contacted leaders of their church about domestic violence, and they rate the effectiveness of this resource in helping victims of domestic violence a 4.52 (mean score).

⇒ Doctors (4.69), hospitals/emergency rooms (4.59), and legal services (4.28) receive fair ratings for their effectiveness in helping victims. All of these resources have been used by at least one in ten victims.

⇒ Victims do not place much confidence in the Division of Child and Family Services (3.98), prosecutors (3.72), schools (3.57), or courts (3.54) in helping victims of domestic violence, although all of these resources have been contacted by at least 10% of the victims.

- Selected negative comments of victims’ experiences with various resource centers include:
  ⇒ not believing the victim/siding with the perpetrator
  ⇒ lack of follow-through once a report of abuse has been made
  ⇒ inconsequential retribution for the perpetrator
  ⇒ male domination of the system
  ⇒ resources are overtaxed/overburdened
  ⇒ resources don’t focus on preventive measures (prevent psychological abuse from turning into physical abuse, physical abuse into severe, recurrent violence, etc.)/will only take action when severe physical abuse is occurring
  ⇒ lack of ability to rectify the problem
  ⇒ tendencies to ignore the problem/hope it goes away
  ⇒ lack of understanding/don’t listen or care
  ⇒ length of the legal process
⇒ lack of counseling options.

- Selected positive comments about victims experiences with various resources reflect the following sentiments:
  ⇒ provide needed information, support, and encouragement
  ⇒ alleviate feelings of loneliness/have someone to talk to that will listen
  ⇒ show willingness to help and stand up for the victim
  ⇒ provide protection and safety
  ⇒ keep confidentialities.

**Experience with Civil Protective Orders**

Few women—even victims—have ever obtained a protective order. Two-thirds (66%) of those who have obtained a civil protective order report that it was easy to obtain (victims: 56%), but opinions vary when asked about the order’s effectiveness in keeping them safe from perpetrators. Nearly half (48%) indicate the order was very or somewhat effective in keeping them safe (victims: 49%); however, 42% say it was very ineffective (victims: 39%).

- Alarmingly, seven in ten (70%) women who have obtained a protective order claim the order was violated—more than four times for nearly half (48%) of these respondents.
• When their protective order was violated, the vast majority (83%) of the respondents called the police, but in only one-quarter of the instances (25%) was the perpetrator arrested.

• The most common suggestion to improve the system with regard to protective orders is to ensure action is taken to arrest the perpetrator (20%).

• This data on civil protective orders is relatively unchanged from 1997.

Experience with Police

• Approximately one in ten (9%) respondents has contacted the police regarding her own domestic violence situation, and another tenth (11%) has done so for someone else—about the same number as in 1997.

• Similar to 1997, women who have called the police in domestic violence situations report that in four out of five instances (80%), the police responded within 30 minutes. Most victims (56%) say the police officers definitely treated them with dignity and respect, while 11% state that officers definitely did not treat them with dignity and respect. Some interviewees
reveal in verbatim comments that police did not believe them regarding the abusive situation, failed to take action (did nothing unless a severe injury occurred, did not arrest the perpetrator, did not try to prevent the abuse from becoming worse, etc.), or sided with the perpetrator.

- Seven in ten (70%) respondents who called the police report that a child was in the home when the incident occurred, but over two-thirds (69%) of these women say that the Division of Child and Family Services was not called in by the police, nor did juvenile court (73%) get involved.
  ⇒ In Salt Lake, Utah, Washington, Weber, Davis, Cache, Box Elder, Tooele, Summit, and San Juan counties, a victim advocate was not called by the police in two-thirds (67%) of the cases.

- The number of arrests appears to have increased from 1997, with 43% of women indicating that an arrest was made when the police responded to the domestic violence situation; this is up from 25% in 1997. In the vast majority of the instances (91%), the perpetrator was arrested. However, in the 2005 study, 9% claim that the victim or the perpetrator and victim were arrested. This was not a significant finding in the 1997 study.

- In half of the domestic violence situations where the police were contacted (50%), at least one person was injured. However, less than half (45%) of these individuals received medical attention. If they did receive medical attention, most (76%) went to the hospital.

- It appears that taking photos at the scene is now more common, with 32% of respondents in 2005 saying that photos were taken when the police responded to the domestic violence situation, compared to 16% in 1997.

- It is also now more likely that criminal charges will be filed in instances of domestic violence, as 33% of women who contacted the police in 2005 report that criminal charges were filed, while only 19% said this action was taken in 1997.

Experience with Courts

- One in nine women (11%) report having dealt with the courts as a result of domestic violence situations—up slightly from 8% in 1997. Half (50%) of these women did so for themselves, while the other half (48%) were supporting someone else.

- Most indicate that the victim was treated with respect and dignity by the prosecutors (71%) and courts (75%); however, a significant number obviously did not receive this same
Domestic Violence: Introduction

• The percentage of women who have dealt with the courts and were dissatisfied with the way their case was resolved decreased from 51% in 1997 to 41% in 2005. Likewise, the percentage of women who were satisfied with the way their case was resolved increased from 45% in 1997 to 55% in 2005.
  ⇒ The two primary reasons for satisfaction are: felt like judgment was fair (26%) and they were understanding/treated me with respect/supportive (12%). Of note, the latter reason was never mentioned in the 1997 study.
  ⇒ The primary reason for dissatisfaction is that the perpetrator was let off too easily/had too many concessions (45%).

• While down from 18% in 1997 to 10% in 2005, stiffer penalties and enforcement remains the most frequently mentioned suggestion for improving the system from women who have dealt with the courts. Additionally, in 2005, one in eight of these respondents made comments specifically concerning gender issues: don’t have anti-women attitudes (4%), better protection for women and children (5%), and a desire to work with more women in the courts and law enforcement (3%).

Experience with Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF)

• Only a small number of women (5% total, 8% victims) have received Temporary Aid for Needy Families from the Department of Workforce Services. Of the respondents who have utilized this service, most (68%) did not recall being asked questions about domestic violence during their initial assessment appointment with an employment counselor, nor talking to a Department of Workforce Services licensed clinical therapist regarding domestic violence issues (80%).

Media Influence on Domestic Violence Problem

• Respondents believe that television programs that demean women and portray unhealthy, violent relationships contribute to domestic violence. Down slightly from 1997 (89%), the majority (85%) of women still agree with this sentiment.
• One in ten (10%) respondents report that the media has contributed to specific incidents of domestic violence in their own lives—unchanged from 1997 (11%).
⇒ Victims (15%) are more likely to say that the media has contributed to domestic violence in their own lives.

- KSL Channel 5, and KUTV Channel 2 are the most viewed television stations among all respondents—65% and 62% say some/most of their viewing is on these channels.
  ⇒ Victims are more likely than non-victims to watch Fox 13, WB, and Lifetime and are less likely to watch KBYU Channel 11 and KUED Channel 7.

- Late night (after 10 p.m.) television viewing has declined from 1997. Evenings (5 p.m.–10 p.m.) remain the most popular television viewing time.

Conclusions

1. It is recommended that the questionnaire in future waves of this study refer to “domestic abuse” versus “domestic violence.” Dan Jones & Associates believes that the general populous equates domestic violence specifically with forceful physical or sexual abuse. The general public may not consider the various forms of psychological abuse addressed in the survey as being “domestic violence.” The term domestic abuse encompasses all forms of abuse and may more accurately reflect public perception of this serious problem.

2. Domestic violence and abuse remains a serious, increasing problem in the state of Utah. Utah women believe this is due in part to the media’s portrayal of unhealthy, violent relationships. However, a significant number of women believe that violence against women is remaining steady, perhaps indicating recognition of community leaders’ efforts to curb the problem.

3. More than one in three women report having been a victim of some form of domestic violence at some point (37%). Thankfully, fewer women report that they experience some form of domestic violence on a daily (5%), weekly (5%), or monthly basis (7%). Considerably more women report that they experience domestic violence a few times a year (17%) or one time a year or less (26%).

4. It appears that most victims know there is help available to them, but many are not seeking it for various reasons, including fear of the perpetrator, lack of financial resources/housing, etc. Sadly, most victims feel people would believe them if they exposed the abuse, yet many feel they have no one to talk to. A significant number of victims have had little success with
the traditional vehicles for stopping abuse, such as civil protective orders, the police, and the courts; therefore, they lack confidence in these resources. It is likely that victims believe the problem will continue and possibly intensify with or without assistance from law enforcement and the courts.

5. Ironically, the most effective resources appear to be the least used. People who are using resources like domestic violence shelters, Rape Crisis Centers, the Domestic Violence Link Line, and victim advocates are finding them effective, but not a lot of victims are using them. Victims still tend to rely on traditional resources, like the police and courts. Often-turned-to resources, like family and churches/faith leaders, may lack knowledge about how to help victims or where to refer them for help. Increasing awareness of effective, useful victim resources should be a top priority.

6. While it remains the most common type of abuse, survey results demonstrate that the incidence of emotional abuse has decreased significantly. However, there were no significant changes in the other reported experiences of abuse. Efforts should continue to fight emotional abuse and evaluate its effects in other areas.

7. While not as prevalent as psychological abuse, the incidence of physical and sexual abuse in Utah is a serious problem. Not calculated in the 1997 study, the Domestic Violence Response Community should continue to track this data in upcoming waves of this study. Of particular concern is the percentage of victims who are sexually abused often (weekly) or frequently (daily).

8. Unfortunately, domestic violence and abuse appears to be a chronic problem for most victims. While they may not suffer abuse frequently (meaning a few times a year), the majority have been victims of this behavior over their lifetimes or the span of several years. In addition, most have been in more than one abusive relationship, and it is likely that they are victims of multiple forms of abuse. A significant number also experienced abusive childhoods. Their abusive experiences have likely contributed to the fact that one in five victims have considered harming themselves, and one in eight has attempted suicide. Abuse has become part of their lifecycles.
9. Seven in ten respondents answer that a child was present in the home when domestic violence occurred (70%). In more than two-thirds of these cases, DCFS was not called in by the police (69%). For more than two-thirds of instances that occurred in Salt Lake, Utah, Washington, Weber, Davis, Cache, Box Elder, Tooele, Summit, and San Juan counties, a victim advocate was not called in by the police. These data are not available for the 1997 study. In addition, it appears there may be a correlation between children who witness abuse and who subsequently abuse others.

10. Victims tend to be significantly more aware of family members or friends who are victims of abuse. Perhaps they are more in tune to the signs of abuse or are more apt to be trusted confidants because of their personal experience. The Domestic Violence Response Community should consider this key finding in developing strategies to help victims help themselves and those around them break patterns of abuse.

11. There is still room for improvement in how the police and the courts handle domestic violence cases, although it appears that some improvement has been made—particularly in the courts.
   - While easy to obtain, the effectiveness of civil protective orders in keeping people safe is highly in question; this may explain why many victims are not seeking them.
   - Many victims do not even call the police in domestic violence situations, which may be due to the low likelihood that perpetrators will be arrested and that charges will be filed; however, this appears to be changing. Victims credit police for treating them with respect and dignity and for responding quickly, but a significant number still cite problems with police not believing them, siding with the perpetrator, or not taking the appropriate action (do nothing unless a severe injury occurred, do not arrest the perpetrator, do not prevent the abuse from becoming worse, etc.)
Contributors

The following organizations contributed to produce this survey:

- Utah Commission for Women and Families
- Division of Workforce Services
- Division of Child and Family Services
- Utah Domestic Violence Council
- Office of Violence Against Women and Families