

Chapter 3: An Garda Síochána

3.1 Introduction

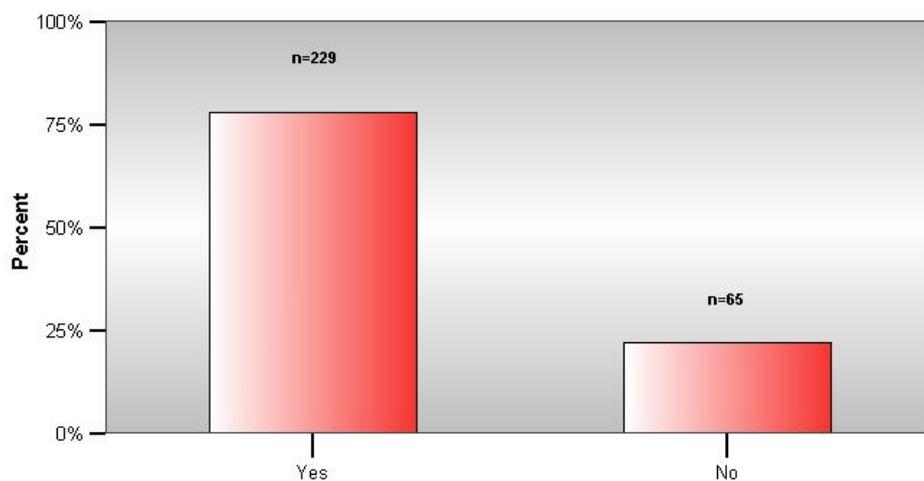
In the aftermath of a crime or a traumatic incident, victims and their families often go through a difficult period of adjustment as they come to terms with what has occurred. Very often, one of the first contacts that a victim will have with the criminal justice system will be with the Gardaí.

It is clear at a policy level that the Gardaí are aware of the broad array of needs and concerns of victims of crime. The Victims Charter notes that the Gardaí are ‘very conscious of [victims'] special place in the criminal justice system, and would like to establish a supportive relationship with [them]’ (1999: 6). Similarly the updated Garda Charter for Victims of Crime, which repeats much of the material contained in 1999 edition of the Victims Charter recognises that the Gardaí ‘are fully committed to addressing victims’ needs and concerns. Respect for the dignity, autonomy and rights of every victim are core values of our service’ (nd: 2) The types of assistance which they commit to providing include the promise to treat victims with courtesy, compassion, and respect; to provide information about the services available; and to provide information about the investigation of a crime and the prosecution of the accused. This chapter will document the research findings relating to victims’ experiences of their interaction with the Gardaí and, in particular, will consider the extent to which their needs in this regard are being met. It will commence with an examination of the extent to which victims of crime report crime to the Gardaí, before considering issues such as the initial provision of information to victims by the Gardaí, victim satisfaction with the statement-taking process, the provision of information by the Gardaí at investigation stage, whether a family liaison officer was assigned (and satisfaction with same), and overall victim satisfaction with the Gardaí.

3.2 Victim Reporting of Crime to the Gardaí

Of those that answered this question (294 respondents in total), 229 respondents (75.6%) answered that they reported the crime to the Gardaí. Sixty five respondents (21.5%) answered that they did not report the crime. The remaining 3% of respondents (9) either did not answer the question or gave an answer that was spoilt.

Fig 3.1: Reporting the Crime to the Gardaí (Victim Postal Survey)



The crucial statistic emanating from these results is that slightly more than 1 in 5 respondents did not report the crime to the Gardaí. It demonstrates that there is more crime than the official picture reveals. As has been documented in other studies, decisions on whether or not to report a crime to law enforcement authorities are influenced by a variety of factors including views about the law enforcement authorities and their effectiveness, perceived seriousness of the offence, perceptions about the likely success of criminal proceedings and the severity of sentence, the ease with which reports can be made, issues of insurance, feelings of shame and weakness,¹ whether the victim believed that the matter could be ‘sorted out’ at a local or individual level, the fear of reprisal, the need to prevent family distress, the fear of

¹ Hanly et al (2009: 362) noted for example in their study of rape victims that the most common reasons given by participants for not making a report included: ‘psychological factors, such as not feeling strong enough to re-tell their experiences, social considerations, including concern at how making a report might affect their families; and concerns about the criminal justice system, especially the fear of not being believed’.

prejudice or not being taken seriously (i.e. homophobic crime is often under reported),² and the fear of being implicated in the crime.³

This finding of under reporting is consistent with other Irish studies. O'Connell and Whelan, for example, in a study in Dublin in the early 1990s noted that 19% of those surveyed did not report the crime (1994: 85). In a follow-up study a few years later, the figure was reported at 20% (Kirwan and O'Connell 2001: 10). Another local study carried out in Limerick in 2002 involving 100 participants found that 54% of individuals did not report crimes perpetrated against them (King 2008: 62). The Quarterly National Household Survey in 2006, which asked 39,000 households about the experiences of crime among those over 18 years of age in the previous 12 months, found that 30% of burglaries (up from 23% in 1998), 39% of violent thefts (roughly the same as in 1998), 47% of assaults (up from 43% in 1998), and 57% of acts of vandalism (down from 60% in 1998) were not reported (CSO 2007).⁴ The SAVI Report into sexual abuse and violence in Ireland noted in 2002, after carrying out a study involving 3,120 participants, that disclosure rates to the Gardaí were very low (McGee et al, 2002: 128-132). Regarding experiences of adult sexual assault, only 1% of men and 8% of women had reported their experiences to the Gardaí (6% overall). Only 8% of adults reported previous experiences of child sexual abuse to the Gardaí (ibid: xxxvii). Other offences, such as the theft of a vehicle⁵ or homicide, have high reporting rates.⁶

The Garda Public Attitude Surveys, carried out annually by the Garda Research Unit and which normally involves around 10,000 participants, estimated in 2002 that 84% of crimes were reported to the Gardaí, down from similar surveys carried out in 1999 (88%) and 2000 (86%) (Garda Research Unit 2002). The reporting rate dropped to

² See 'Massive fall in homophobic crime sparks fear of under-reporting' Sunday Tribune 26 July, 2009.

³ On the reasons for non-reporting, see O'Connell (2000: 7). See also Breen and Rottman (1985) and CSO (2007).

⁴ It is important to note that the Quarterly National Household survey did not ask about sexual assaults or domestic violence.

⁵ The CSO estimated that 92.2% of all car thefts were reported in 2006 (CSO 2007: 3)

⁶ From our study of victims who contacted support services, the results show, for example, that crimes of arson and robbery were reported in all cases. 24% of miscellaneous crimes such as stalking and personal threats went unreported. 23% of crimes of domestic violence and fraud/deception went unreported, as did 20% of crimes of abduction and sexual offences. 18% of assaults (other than domestic violence) and 13% of crimes of dangerous and careless driving went unreported. Crimes of false imprisonment, criminal damage, theft and burglary were unreported in less than 10% of cases.

79% in 2004 before rising to 86% in 2006 and 87% in 2007. The reporting figure for 2008 was 84% (Garda Research Unit 2006; Garda Research Unit 2008). These surveys included offences across the range – burglaries, thefts, criminal damage, robberies, fraud, assaults, sexual assaults, domestic violence (physical) and other categories.

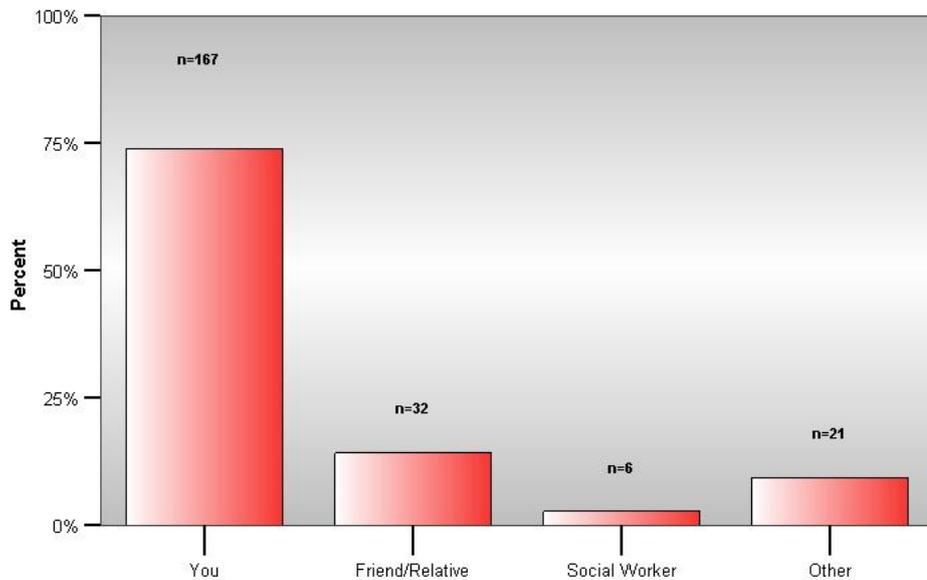
Though this study is consistent with other Irish studies in that it reveals a level of under reporting to the Gardaí, the results differ markedly as to the degree of this under reporting. Much of the divergence between the different studies may be attributable to issues of methodology relating to the inclusion and classification of offences, the kind and size of the population sampled, the nature of the questions, the degree of empathy established with the interviewer and so on.

Though many of the reasons for non-reporting are beyond the direct control of the Gardaí (fear of being implicated, fear of family distress, lack of seriousness of the offence), it is important that the Gardaí ensure as far as possible that an environment is created where victims are in a position to make a report at a time which is convenient to them, that when reporting their account of events they will be treated seriously, that at all times they will be treated with dignity and respect, and that they will not be judged or prejudiced in giving that account.

3.3 Who reported the crime?

Of those who reported the crime and provided a valid response (226 respondents), it is clear that the majority of victims from the sample reported the crime themselves (74%). In another 14% of cases a friend or relative did so; in 3% of cases a social worker reported the crime, and in 9% of cases another individual reported the crime.

Fig 3.2: Who Reported the Crime (Victim Postal Survey)

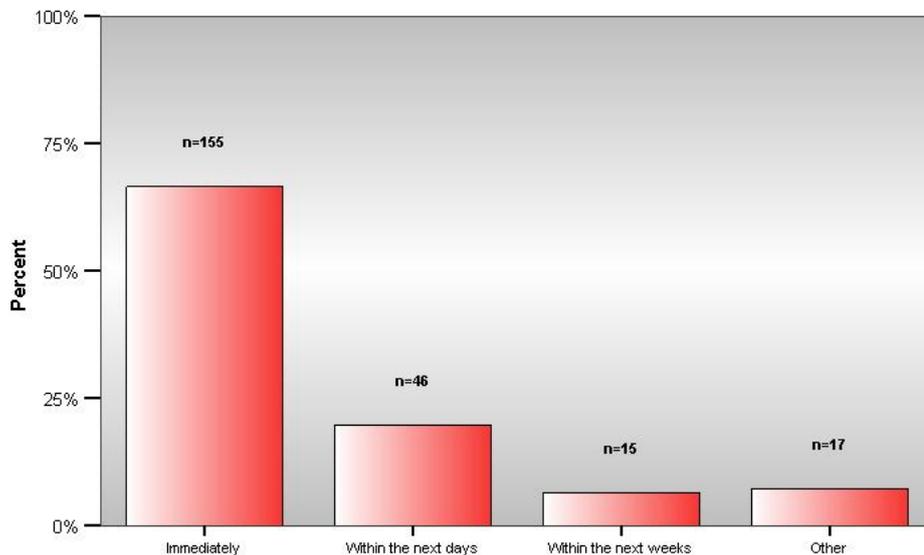


This other individual category included another victim (1 case); business partner (1); co-workers (3); local persons (2); the accused’s mother (1); passer-by (5); support workers (3); the accused (1); witnesses (2); hotel staff (1); and a security manager (1).

3.4 When was the crime reported?

Of those who reported the crime and provided a valid response to this question (233 respondents), 66.5% of respondents answered that they reported the crime immediately; 19.7% answered that they reported within a few days of the incident and a further 6.4% answered that they reported within a few weeks.

Fig3.3: When was Crime Reported (Victim Postal Survey)



Of the remaining 17 respondents (7.3%) who answered the question, only 1 noted that he or she reported the crime within a year. The vast majority of this cohort answered that it took them a number of years to report with 5 answering that it took 25 or more years to do so. These 17 respondents reported a total of 30 offences, an average of almost 2 crimes each. Thirteen of these 17 respondents (77%) were victims of sexual offences.⁷

3.5 The provision of details by the Gardaí

It is now well recognised that part of the process of addressing victims' needs and concerns relates to the provision of information. The Victims Charter, for example, identified the need to describe 'all the elements of the criminal justice system from the victim's perspective' (1999: 2) The EU *Framework Decision on the Standing of Victims in Criminal Proceedings*, which the Council adopted in March 2001, requires that victims in EU states have access to relevant information, in particular from their

⁷ In Ireland, an accused person facing criminal charges relating to a delayed complaint can seek to have the complaint struck out on the grounds that it prejudices his right to a fair trial. See *S.H v Director of Public Prosecutions* [2006] 3 IR 575

first contact with law enforcement agencies, to the information relevant to the protection of their interests like the type of organisations they can turn to for support, and the type of support they can obtain.⁸

In the initial stages, particularly after a crime is reported, the provision of information ordinarily relates to the support services available, contact names for the investigating Garda, and an incident number so that victims can follow up on cases and make appropriate inquiries. Watson (2000), for example, documented the clear need to provide follow up information on both the criminal process and the support services available. To this end, the Garda Charter for Victims of Crime (nd: 2) points out that:

An Garda Síochána is very conscious of the special place which victims have in the Garda service delivery process and the criminal justice system. We are committed to establishing a helpful and supportive relationship with you. Special regard for your dignity, concerns and needs is a high priority for us.

It also states that Gardaí will inform victims ‘of the name, telephone, number and station of the investigating Garda’ and ‘the services available for victims of crime or a traumatic incident.’ The Gardaí have also adopted the procedure of issuing a letter to the victim informing him or her of the name of the investigating Garda, how to contact the Gardaí, details of the Pulse incident number, and the number of the National Crime Victims Helpline.⁹ This letter is also accompanied by a list of national and regional organisations that support victims of crime. The Garda Annual Report of 2008, for example, indicates that An Garda Síochána has listed as a strategic goal that 100% of crime victims are notified in writing of the contact details of the investigating Garda and, where appropriate, of the availability of victim support services (Garda Annual Report 2008: 15).

However, the Garda Attitude Survey of 2008—which involved 10,000 interviews across 25 Garda Divisions—demonstrates that there is a substantial gap in the provision of information. In 2008, for example, 68% of those surveyed revealed that they did not receive a letter about the crime; in 2007 this figure stood at 71% and in

⁸ See also *The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales* at para 5.3, available at <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/victims-code-of-practice?view=Binary>

⁹ Or the Irish Tourist Assistance Service (ITAS).

2006 at 73% (the table reproduced below is taken from the Garda Public Attitude Survey of 2008).¹⁰

Table 17 Receipt of Garda letter about the crime

Receipt of letter		Yes	No	Total
		%	%	n
Survey	2008	32	68	728
	2007	29	71	773
	2006	27	73	807

Respondents in the category 'don't know/can't remember' have been excluded.

Of those who did not receive a letter, or did not recall receiving a letter, 53% claimed not to have received the name of the investigating Garda by other means in 2008. The percentage figures for those who claimed not to have received the name of the investigating Garda by other means in 2007 was 59% and in 2006 the figure stood at 54% (the table reproduced below is taken from the Garda Public Attitude Survey of 2008).¹¹

Table 19 Victim informed of Garda name by other means?

Year	Yes	No	Total
	%	%	n
2008	47	53	704
2007	41	59	741
2006	46	54	755

In this research study, the following information was revealed in relation to the provision of information by the Gardaí:

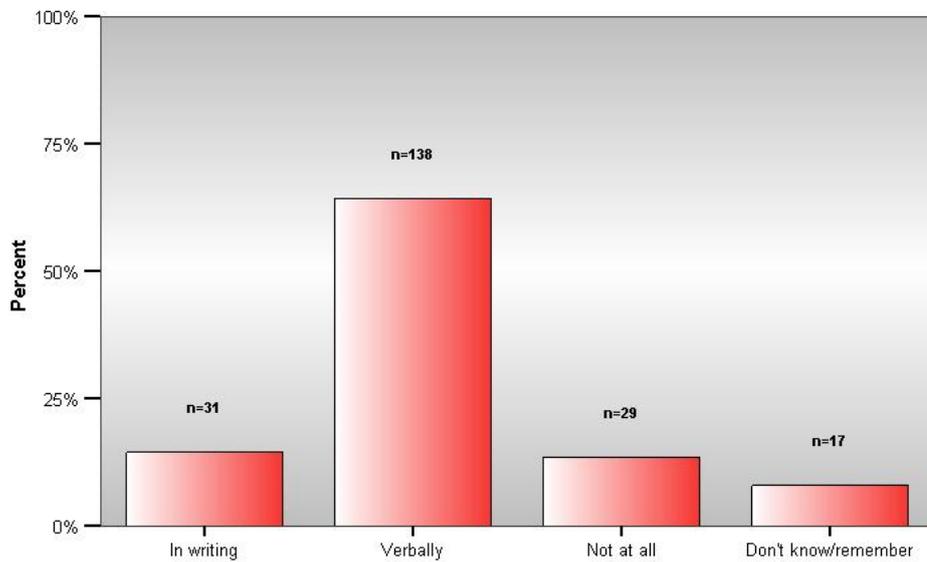
(i) Receipt of Name of Investigating Garda

Of those that reported the crime and answered the question validly (215 respondents), 14.4% received the contact details of the investigating Garda in writing; 64.2% received it verbally; 13.5% (29 respondents) did not receive it at all, and 7.9% could not remember.

¹⁰ Garda Research Unit (2008) *Garda Public Attitude Survey 2008* (Templemore: Garda Research Unit, 2008), p. 11

¹¹ Garda Research Unit (2008) *Garda Public Attitude Survey 2008* (Templemore: Garda Research Unit, 2008), p. 12.

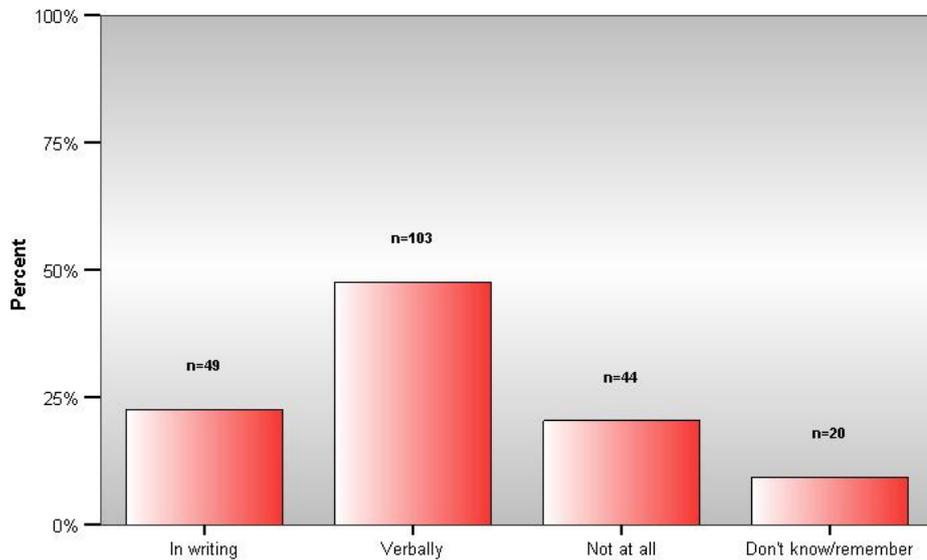
Fig 3.4: Receipt of Name of Investigating Garda (Victim Postal Survey)



(ii) Contact Details of Investigating Garda

Of the 216 valid responses to this question, 22.7% of respondents (49) said they received the contact details for the investigating Garda in writing; 47.7% of respondents (103) said they received it verbally; 20.4% (44) said they did not receive it at all; and 9.3% (20) did not know or could not remember if they received the information.

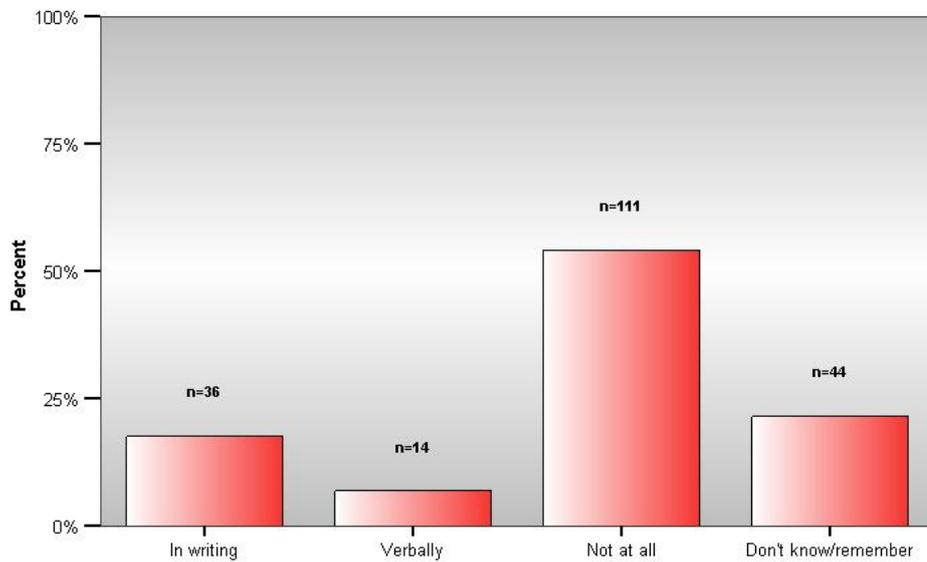
Fig 3.5: Receipt of Contact Details of Investigating Garda (Victim Postal Survey)



(iii) Receipt of Pulse Incident Number

Of those who reported the crime and answered this question (205 respondents), 17.6% received the Pulse incident number in writing; 6.8% received it verbally; 54.1% did not receive it at all (111 respondents); and 21.5% did not know or could not remember.

Fig 3.6: Receipt of Pulse Incident Number (Victim Postal Survey)

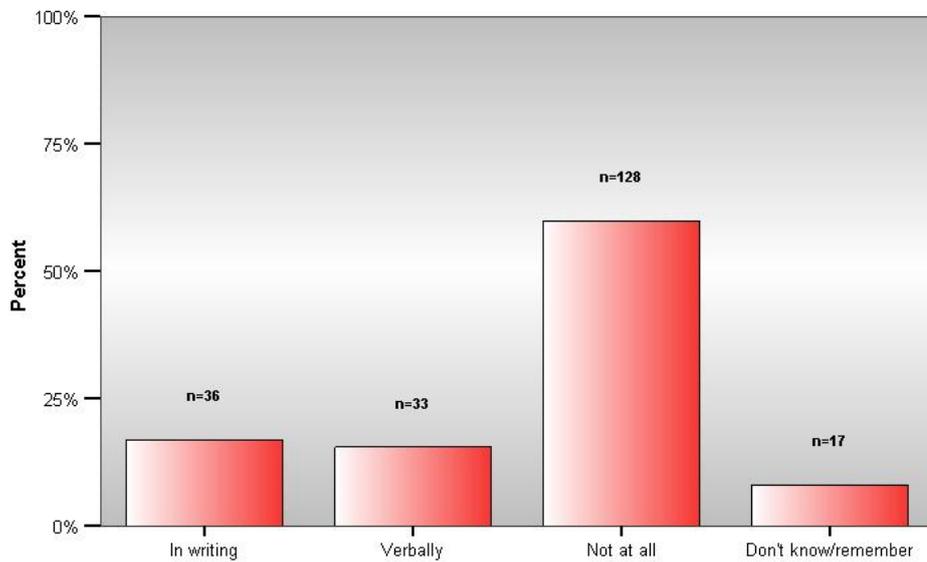


(iv) Receipt of Crime Victims Helpline Number

Of those who reported the crime and answered this question validly (214 respondents), 16.8% of respondents (36 respondents) did receive a number for the Crime Victims Helpline in writing; 15.4% of respondents (33) received it verbally; 59.8% did not receive it at all (128) and 7.9% (17) did not know or could not remember.¹²

¹² The failure by the Gardaí to pass on the number of the Crime Victims Helpline to victims may, in part, explain the limited use made by victims of the helpline. As shall be discussed more fully in chapter 4, only 31.4% of survey respondents indicated that they had contacted the helpline.

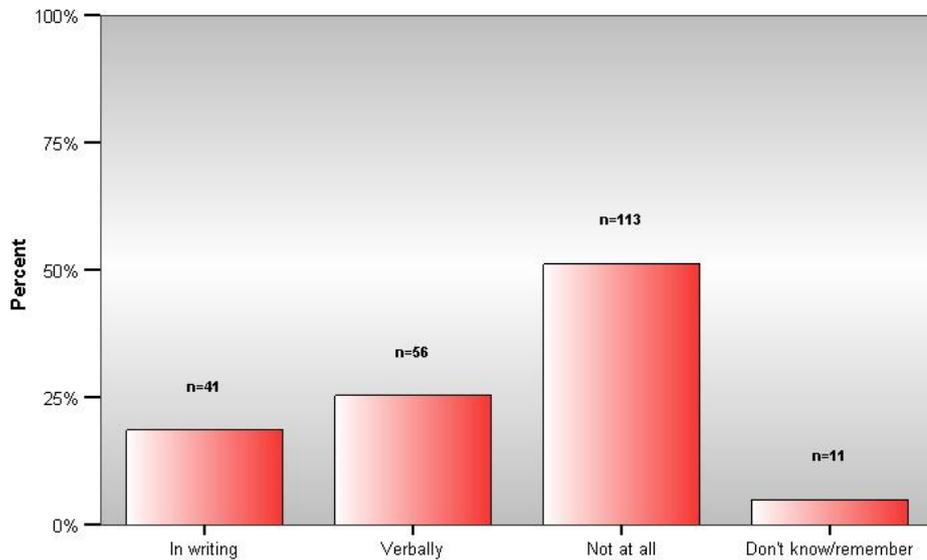
Fig 3.7: Receipt of Crime Victims Helpline Number (Victim Postal Survey)



(v) Receipt of Contact Number for a Group Supporting Victims

To ascertain practices in relation to Garda provision of contact details for support groups, the victim survey included a question which asked respondents if they had received such a number from the Gardaí. Of those who answered this question (221 respondents), 18.6% of respondents were given a group contact number in writing (41); 25.3% were given the information verbally (56); 51.1% did not receive a contact number for a group supporting victims from the Gardaí (113); and 5% did not remember whether they received such information or not.

Fig 3.8: Receipt of Contact Number for a Group Supporting Victims (Victim Postal Survey)



All the interviewees had sought support from groups or organisations. Significantly only a few of them had received information or contact details relating to these groups from the Gardaí but had instead relied on other sources of information. Catherine, whose brother was murdered, cannot recall whether or not she received information from the Gardaí on any support group immediately after the crime. There was a general lack of information initially and also confusion surrounding existing victim support organisations.

It was in the Coroner's court that I finally heard about them [AdVIC]. In the beginning there was a lot of confusion, we might have been told about them but we were probably not taking it in properly. Somebody told me that there were two or three groups and that there had been some sort of a split and I thought I'm not able for that...but I rang one of the numbers...

(Catherine)

Carol cannot recall being informed about various support groups by Gardaí. She relied on the internet for much of her information and approached various groups for various different types of support until she got in contact with the Court Support Service which appeared to meet all of her needs.

Initially, I didn't know what was out there, I was basically educating myself on what help was out there...I rang Victim Support first and they put me on to Court Support Service and I just didn't look for anybody else because I didn't need anybody else because they answered all my needs...regardless of what, I was assured always somebody on the phone, day or night.

(Carol)

In Tracy's case, it was her partner who found the support group for her.

I was having really bad nightmares and ended up leaving [city]...I wouldn't move outside the door by myself, I had to be escorted...He [partner] said enough is enough and he went through a local directory...and he found the support group and he rang them and said: "She needs help, she needs something" so it was actually through him...[partner] rang first and the girl rang back and she made an appointment for me to go in and speak to her...

(Tracy)

Moreover, when respondents were asked, in part 7 of the victim postal questionnaire, how the criminal justice system could be improved having regard to their own individual experiences, many referred to the lack of information provided by the Gardaí in relation to support groups. The quotes below indicate the nature of victim experiences of receiving information from the Gardaí.

I was lucky with the investigating detective, very helpful but a lot of what I discovered was because I dared to ask. I wasn't told about a lot of things, like I could contact state solicitor. [I] found out who he was and phoned him. I didn't know about expenses. [I] wasn't aware of [the] Rape Crisis Centre until nearly one year after crime – knew of them but not aware of their role.

(Victim of sexual offences and false imprisonment)

[T]he Gardaí need to be more assertive about giving out details of support organisations.

(Family member of a victim of homicide and sexual offences)

[I] would have liked if the Garda informed me about the refuge when I made the call after being abused. It was a social worker many weeks later. I am sad that I spent those weeks feeling lonely and isolated...

(Victim of domestic violence)

In my particular case I do not believe I received adequate support from the Gardaí. I was not even notified in writing that I would have to attend as a witness. I was not given a pulse incident number or details to any local support organisations that I could contact.

(Victim of domestic violence/criminal damage)

In addition to the high attrition rates regarding the reporting of crime, there is clearly an issue regarding the provision of information from the Gardaí. This difficulty was in part already highlighted by the Garda Research Unit in relation to the provision of the name of the investigating Garda to a victim of crime. Our study confirms this deficit in the provision of information. Although the provision of such information is a stated policy of the Gardaí, it appears from the questionnaire responses in this study that this is often not the case. Roughly 1 in 10 of the respondents who reported a crime indicated that they did not receive the name of the Garda to whom they reported the crime; 1 in 5 claimed not to have received the contact details of the investigating Garda; 1 in 2 claimed not to have received the pulse incident number; 1 in 2 claimed not to have received a contact for a group supporting victims;¹³ and only 4 in every 10 respondents who reported the crime indicated that they received the number for the Crime Victims Helpline. There also appears to be a clear division in terms of the information provided to victims of crime by the Garda at reporting stage. Although roughly only 1 in 10 victims of crime did not receive the name of the Garda to whom they reported the crime, and 1 in 5 did not receive the contact details of the investigating Garda, far greater numbers of victims (roughly half) did not receive the Pulse incident number, a contact for a group supporting crime victims, and a number for the Crime Victims Helpline.

Given that the Gardaí are often one of the initial contacts following a crime,¹⁴ it is vital that they provide relevant information on the investigation of the crime (name and contact details of investigating Garda, Pulse Incident number), and advise on the support services available (the Crime Victims Helpline, and more specific support services). The survey supports the contention that the Gardaí are not systematically passing on information which may be of practical and emotional support to victims of crime (particularly in relation to Pulse incident numbers, the Crime Victims Helpline, and more specific support services). This information deficit can result in secondary victimisation, intensifying the harms caused by the crime and aggravating the trauma experienced by the victim.

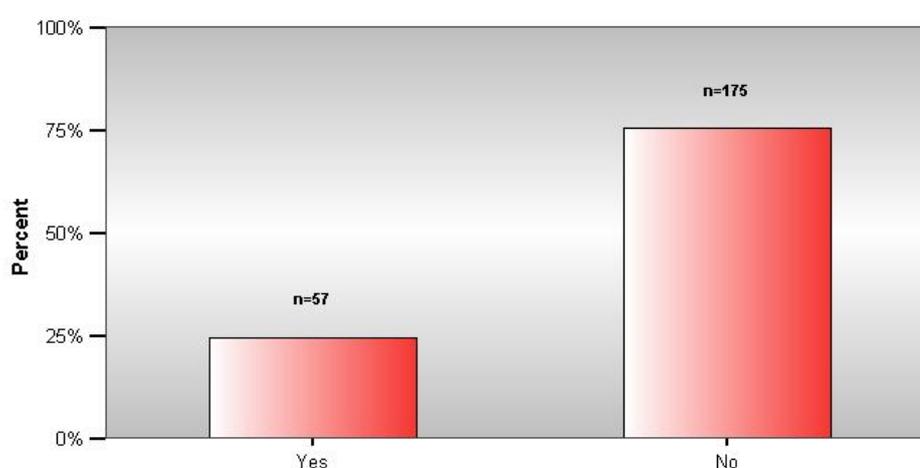
¹³ Similarly Hanly et al (2009: 173) noted in their study of rape victims that 42% of respondents indicated that they were not given information about support services from the Gardaí

¹⁴ As is evident above, most victims who report a crime do so immediately after its occurrence.

3.6 Consent for referrals.

Of the 232 valid responses to this question, 24.6% (57) of respondents confirmed that a Garda did ask for their consent to pass their details to a group supporting victims, but 75.4% (175) replied that they were not asked.

Fig 3.9: Did the Gardaí ask for your consent to refer details to a group supporting victims (Victim Postal Survey)



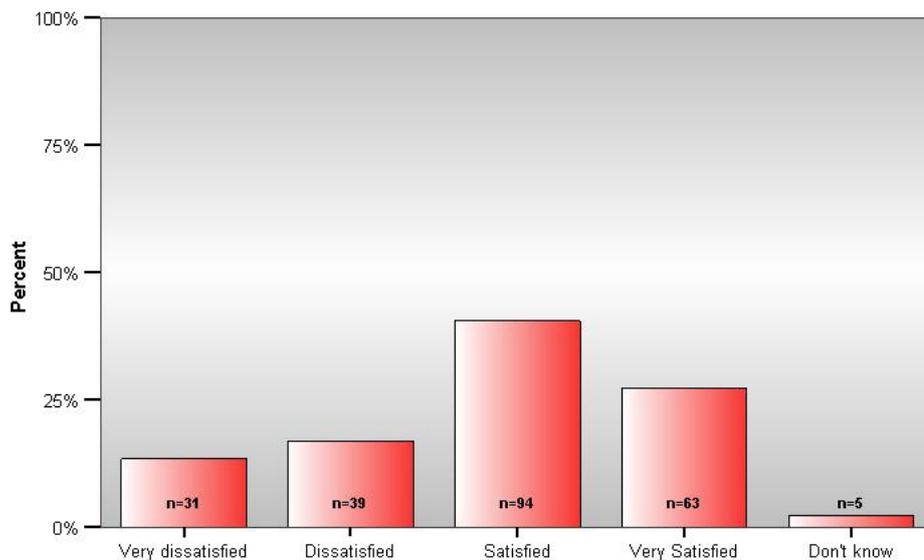
In the light of the high numbers of respondents who claim not to have received a contact for a group supporting victims or the number for the Crime Victims Helpline, it is likely that many of the respondents who indicated that they were not asked to consent did not have their details passed on to a group supporting crime victims. Nevertheless, in order to protect the interests of victims, it is necessary that standard practices are adopted in relation to the provision and referral of information. It is now established that any referral procedure by the Gardaí to victim support organisations must be based on the informed consent of the victim. The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner has indicated that it would be likely that it would have to rule against An Garda Síochána for incompatible disclosure of personal data, if details were handed over to support organisations without the victim's consent.¹⁵

¹⁵ Case Study 8/01 Victim Support – liaison with An Garda Síochána – disclosure of victim details – issue of consent, available at www.dataprotection.ie/viewdoc.asp?DOCID=128

3.7 Garda sensitivity during the statement taking process.

There were 232 valid responses to this question. Roughly 7 out of every 10 respondents indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with Garda sensitivity during the statement-taking process.¹⁶ 40.5% of respondents (94) indicated that they were satisfied with the sensitivity of the Gardaí during the statement-taking process, and 27.2% (63) indicated that they were very satisfied. Of those who indicated that they felt that the Gardaí were not sensitive in the statement-taking process, 16.8% (39) expressed themselves as dissatisfied, and 13.4% (31) expressed themselves as very dissatisfied. Five respondents (2.2%) did not know whether they were satisfied or not with the sensitivity of the Gardaí during the statement-taking process.

Fig 3.10: Victim Satisfaction with the Sensitivity of the Gardaí During the Statement Taking Process (Victim Postal Survey)



Many of the interviewees also expressed satisfaction with the sensitivity of the Gardaí during the statement-taking process. Barry had been assaulted in a public car park in front of his two children. His wife rang the Gardaí while he was still in hospital. Barry said that the statement-taking process was thoroughly explained to him:

¹⁶ Hanly et al (2009: 166) made similar findings in their study of rape victims, with over two-thirds of respondents indicating that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the Garda who took their statement.

He went through the whole thing and he said that pieces could be pulled up in court during cross examination...[The Garda] came to my own house...

(Barry)

Phil, another victim of assault who had been attacked by a gang on the way home from the pub, was also satisfied with Garda sensitivity during the statement-taking process. The Gardaí were in the vicinity and were on the scene within minutes of the incident. Phil remembers that three Gardaí came in to see him in the hospital later that night: "... [They] just wanted to see how I was, what state I was in...they were very concerned...". Phil called to the Garda station around one week later to give a formal statement and he also received the Garda's name and contact details on a card.

The guard that was on the case, the young chap, interviewed me, he contacted me. I went down, we sat in an area, an interview room and I just told him what happened...That was the statement...I felt grand, he was grand...He gave me his name, I still have the card in my wallet...

(Phil)

Kylie, a victim of domestic violence, then aged 19, had been in a violent relationship with her boyfriend for some time but never reported the assault to the police before. After a particularly bad beating, a friend of her boyfriend drove her to the Garda station. Her experience of the Garda response was very positive, something which might be explained by the severity of her injuries. She was positively surprised by the treatment she received by the Gardaí, in particular the female Garda whom she met first and later the investigating Garda.

The first lady guard I saw, she was absolutely unbelievably brilliant and she was very, very open and warm to me and then I remember seeing a couple of other guards looking at me and I felt that they were judging me, especially when they heard who did it. I could see one or two had tears in their eyes when they saw the extent of everything, but once I was assigned a guard, he bent over backwards to do everything for me...I gave the initial statement to a [female] garda and I gave the others then to my assigned guard...My mother and father came down, they were there for the next four days when I had to make statements...[The Gardaí] treated me with more respect than anything to be honest...

(Kylie)

Gerry, a victim of a kidnapping, had only positive words to say about the Gardaí admitting that in the past they would not have responded swiftly to calls involving minor crimes relating to his retail business.

They were absolutely professional...I would say the conduct of the Garda Síochána throughout the whole thing was exemplary...and fantastic...I found the Garda Síochána very, very good throughout the whole thing...

(Gerry)

Similarly, Valerie, a victim of dangerous and careless driving leading to the death of a family member praised the initial response by Gardaí as they called to the accident. Valerie was taken to a nearby hospital and while there she was visited by two Gardaí who identified themselves to her and gave her their names and mobile phone numbers in writing. They told her that she could make a statement in her own local Garda station whenever she felt ready to do it. Ten days after the accident she arranged with local Gardaí to make the statement in her own home.

They invited them [two sisters] to stay with me to make the statement...They were very, very kind...They came up to me about 1 o'clock in afternoon. I told them the story briefly and one of them started the writing and took it down word for word and they were very helpful...They made suggestions, as well, just to help me and as it turned out, that actually was very helpful and everything I said in my statement was there and was later used in court, you know, that I had said that daddy had driven that road for the last 43 years and had been a careful driver and never had had an accident...They were in the house for two hours...They were very good.

(Valerie)

Although most of the experiences of the interviewees were positive in relation to the statement-taking process, one in particular voiced concern. John, a victim of a sexual assault, felt extremely vulnerable and exposed giving his statement.

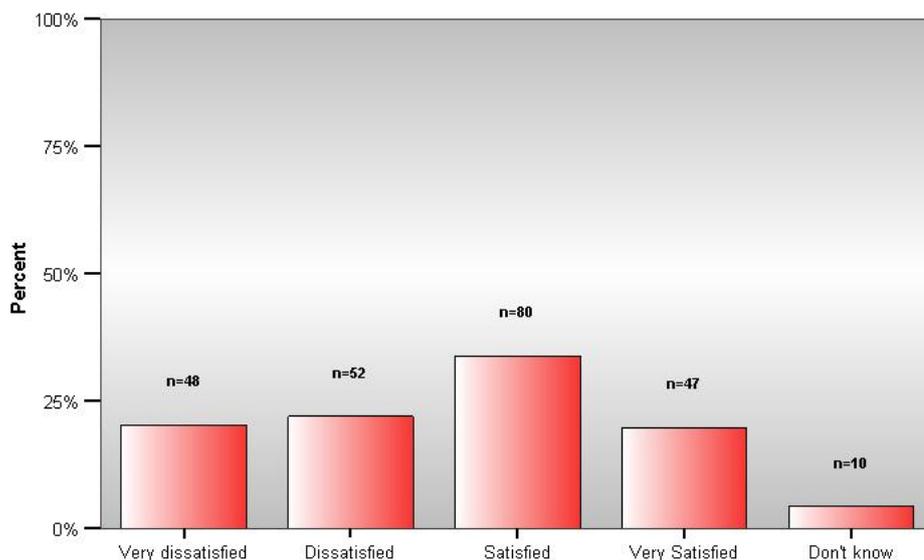
I made a full statement on Thursday evening...It was such a huge invasion, obviously what happened was huge... [It was a] huge thing to happen but I felt very kind of exposed which is probably normal...I didn't feel that the treatment I got, although they were...on certain levels obviously aware of how difficult this was for me...I still felt that I was overly exposed...I didn't feel that I had the support there that I needed being a gay person...I got the impression that assumptions were made...plus the room was absolutely freezing cold, there was no heating...It was January...I was just given the man's name [investigating Garda?] on a card...and his phone number...

(John)

3.8. Satisfaction with the information provided by the Gardaí to victims during the investigative process

There were 237 valid responses to this question. 53.6% of respondents (127) expressed themselves satisfied (80) or very satisfied (47) with the information provided by the Gardaí during the investigative process. 42.2% of respondents (100) expressed themselves as dissatisfied (52) or very dissatisfied (48) with the information provided. A further 4.2% (10 respondents) did not know whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied.

Fig 3.11: Satisfaction with Information Provided by the Gardaí during the Investigative Process (Victim Postal Survey)



The dissatisfaction rate of 42.2% in relation to information provided by the Gardaí during the investigation stage is high. Nevertheless it is lower than that expressed in Garda Public Attitude Surveys (as reproduced in the table below). For example, and as outlined in the table below, dissatisfaction ratings with the provision of information during the investigation stage ran at 56% in 2008 and 2007; 58% in 2006; 52% in 2005; and 57% in 2004.¹⁷

¹⁷ The table below was provided in Garda Research Unit Report (2008: 13). It is important to note that our survey was limited to victims who used victim support organisations.

Table 23 Satisfaction with being kept informed of progress

Survey	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total
	%	%	%	%	n
2008	10	34	33	23	779
2007	11	34	35	21	824
2006	10	32	34	24	857
2005	12	37	31	21	956
2004	12	31	26	31	75
2003	9	28	37	26	82
2002	15	33	31	21	1045

The percentages for 2007 and 2005 do not sum to exactly 100 due to rounding.

Some interviewees expressed their satisfaction with the provision of information during the investigation process. Ted, for example, who had been assaulted by his son-in-law, kept in regular contact with his local Garda station:

She [investigating Garda] used to ring my daughter...once a month [reporting back]...Occasionally I would drop in to see how the case was developing...and they were quite nice to me from that time on, they got to know me going in...

(Ted)

Most of the interviewees, however, expressed their dissatisfaction with the provision of information by the Gardaí during the investigation process. Harriet, for example, had her passport stolen:

They were to ring us when they would have the CCTV checked...That was on the 12th and on the 29th. I still hadn't received any calls so I rang on the 29th of August and I spoke to this guy [name] and he said [assigned Garda] is not in, ring back at half past nine. I rang back at half nine, he was in a meeting. I rang at quarter to ten, he was gone out of the office. I rang again that night, he was actually off for the weekend and the week later he was on holidays...He never contacted us...So I kept going and I was getting madder and I kept ringing and ringing...So I said: "Look, can I speak to the sergeant"...and they said, "You can't speak to the sergeant, we'll contact [assigned Garda] and we'll get him to call you back". So he did call me back that night, but basically what he said was they watched all the CCTV and there was nothing on it.

(Harriet)

I was almost a nuisance to them and I wanted to be a nuisance...The more he wasn't ringing back the angrier I was getting... I think definitely that the victim should be treated with more respect. We really felt that we got absolutely no respect from them whatsoever...

(Harriet)

Phil, who had expressed satisfaction with the Gardaí during the statement-taking process, became frustrated with the lack of information offered during the investigation stage.

The guard said if anything happens they will notify me whatever the case is. I still haven't heard anything since...I haven't rang them because if there's anything new they'll ring me...a year and a half ago...

(Phil)

Donal who was a victim of burglary received a letter from his local Garda station a week after reporting the crime. The crime itself was, however, never investigated and the letter was the only communication Donal received from the Gardaí.

[A] Superintendent sent me a letter a week later with a pulse number...I had no contact with the guards since. I even rang up in relation to the Garda but every time I rang up he wasn't there and I left my number but no one ever bothered. I think I even went down to see the guard to see what happened... I think this was only a minor detail...to them but it wasn't a minor detail to me... I thought I'd...speak to the guard...I thought that maybe we'd have a little chat about it and that they'd come back...I'd say I rang the guards about three times approximately but they never rang back and I just didn't bother then.

(Donal)

Tracy, a victim of domestic violence, kept ringing the Garda station to find out what was happening and whether or not they had arrested her attacker. She found it almost impossible to get hold of the investigating Garda.

I used to ring the Garda station to find out what was going on and he was never there and I'd leave messages and leave messages and he'd never answer them. He called to my mum's a few weeks ago and he was looking for me and he left a message with my mum: "can you get her to contact me"...I rang the Garda station: "no, he's finished". [I asked]: "can you leave a message for him, it's really important that he rings me back, I need to know what he wants?" And he never did...¹⁸

(Tracy)

¹⁸ Hanly et al (2009: 179) document similar expressions of dissatisfaction in their study. One respondent in that study noted: 'Never followed up complaint, Anytime I contacted Garda in charge of case she was never there to take calls.' Another noted: 'Am sick of having to hound Garda only to be told will be in at X hours and on phoning again not in.' In the Hanly survey, almost forty per cent of respondents stated that they found it difficult or very difficult to obtain information about the progress of their cases (2009: 174).

Kate, also a victim of domestic violence, had a safety order in place for herself and her daughters which allowed the Gardaí to arrest her husband immediately after his attack. She was dissatisfied however with the level of information she received as the case proceeded.

I phoned [Garda station] three or four times... “They’ll get back to you”...The day before the court case was to go ahead the [investigating Garda] drove in the squad car, into my drive. My daughter was sitting in her car, that’s the way he told her the case is going ahead tomorrow. She received one letter two weeks before that just to say that someone was being held accountable. That’s all really it said in the letter, no date, no nothing, not telling her what it meant. I had to ring [Garda station] to ask what does this word mean? “It just means your husband is being charged...”

(Kate)

In another case of domestic violence, Brendan, a Garda with many years experience of the criminal justice system, was accused by his wife of assaulting her and sexually assaulting their children.

I had to chase them (the Gardaí) for information. I suppose, they were very hap-hazard in giving me information They took a statement and I still didn’t know what was happening...I had to ring up and say “well, is there a file going to the DPP?” but if I didn’t know the procedures I would have been in a terrible mess.

(Brendan)

During the time of the investigation John, a victim of sexual assault, initially received one or two phone calls from the investigating Garda who was checking to see how he was. After those phone calls, however, it was left up to him to retrieve information about how his case was proceeding.

I had to write letters and I didn’t get any responses to my letters ever...So I would ring up and there were always excuses... “Oh, I wasn’t on duty” and stuff...but I knew when he was on duty...So there was a lot of lies told...It took huge strength to pick up the phone to deal with it again, because you had to face it...bringing yourself back again...every time...

(John)

Valerie, who had initially expressed satisfaction with the statement-taking process, was very disappointed with the Gardaí at the investigation stage. She was injured and a close relative was killed in a road incident in 2006. The case did not go to trial until November 2008 and Valerie had to embark on a stressful journey involving many elements of the criminal justice system. The first obstacle was trying to get hold of the investigating Garda on the case.

I think at that point in time [after the statement had been made] things got quiet which obviously for us was very difficult, because we needed to know what happened the other person and I was ringing, it would have been almost every day at the time trying to catch him, trying to talk to him...I would have been on to [Garda station] three times in a week from September to December/January.... “No, the other person hasn’t given a statement, she’s not well enough to give a statement”...It was actually very difficult for me to establish any contact with them...

(Valerie)

During this time, Valerie rang the investigating Garda on a regular basis as she wanted to be informed about every step of the process. This, however, proved to be near to impossible so Valerie decided to communicate directly with the superintendent instead.

I would have moved on from the investigation Garda because we were tearing our hair out going absolutely nowhere. Our solicitor had advised us to move on at that point, which I actually did then. I was in direct communication with the superintendent...[The] Gardaí never take a phone call straight away, they always get back to you, you never get them straight up.

(Valerie)

Some of the victim survey respondents, in answer to how the criminal justice system could be improved in the victim postal questionnaire, also referred to the lack of information available at investigation stage:

My only experience to date has been with the Gardaí. I would like more contact, even a call once a week. I am anxiously waiting for DPP’s decision and I have been informed that if he doesn’t take a prosecution I will not be advised to as the reasons. This is a great source of anxiety.

(Victim of a sexual offence)

Essentially I felt ‘lost’ in the system and it would be of benefit to receive some type of contact from the investigating Garda at least on a monthly basis

following completion of a statement up to and for a time after the case comes to – or not to – court.

(Victim of a sexual offence)

Though this questionnaire is concerning ‘crime’ I feel the issue of missing people (sometimes due to violent crime) is also relevant. We, the families, rely heavily on the Gardaí, but personal experience and stories from others reveals that actions of the Gardaí is slow, uninformative and largely ineffective...

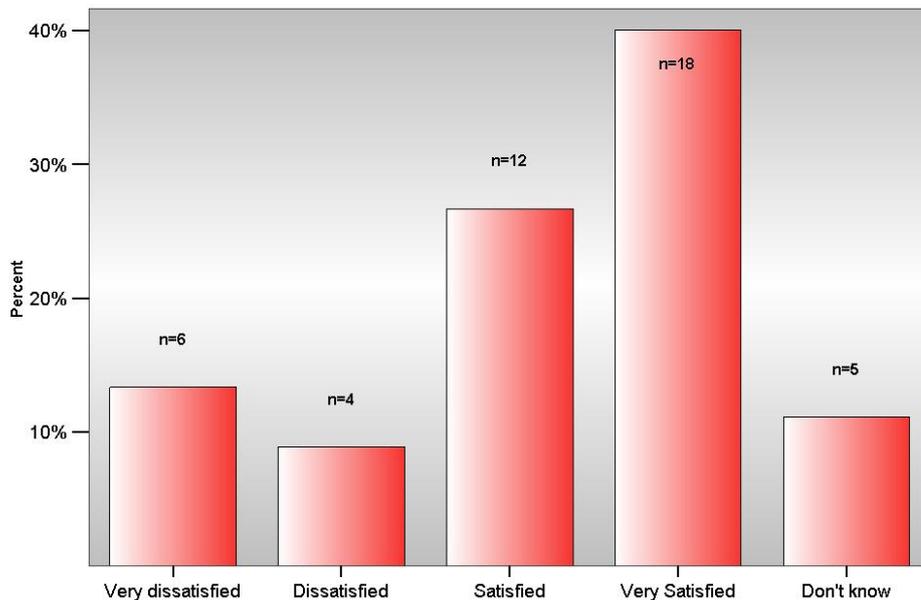
(Family member of a missing person)

It is clear that many of the victims in this study are dissatisfied with the level of information provided by the Gardaí in respect of the investigation of crime. For victims, as documented in the above quoted passages, the lack of information was evidence of a lack of respect, demonstrated that they were not being taken seriously, and acted as a further burden. This breakdown in the provision of information causes further and unnecessary suffering to victims of crime, and represents a form of secondary victimisation. It is vital that the Gardaí recognise that law enforcement is not simply concerned with an offender-orientated investigation. The investigative process must also embrace victim-related responsibilities including the provision of information on the progress of a case until it is closed, or passed on to another authority.

3.9 Satisfaction of Victims with Family Liaison Officer

Garda Family Liaison Officers are appointed to provide support to victims effected by traumatic crimes such as homicide and false imprisonment, and other serious crimes where it is deemed appropriate by the local superintendent. The role of the Family Liaison Officer is to keep the victim, or the victim’s family, informed on all matters relating to the crime and to provide practical information and support. In the postal survey, respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the support provided by such an officer. There were 294 valid responses to this question. The largest cohort of responses (84.7%) noted that they did not have a Family Liaison Officer assigned to their cases. Of the 45 respondents who reported that they had a Family Liaison Officer assigned to their case, 66% (30) were satisfied or very satisfied, while 22% (10) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, and 11% (5) did not know.

Fig 3.12: Victim Satisfaction with support provided by Family Liaison Officer (excluding not relevant category) (Victim Postal Survey)



Though the sample that had contact with a Family Liaison Officer is small, it is clear that of those who used the service, the majority were satisfied with the support provided. This is also borne out in the interviews with victims. Bernice, for example, whose children’s father had been murdered in a different county, was very positive about her liaison officer and his contact with her.

I had a direct line to him...He kept me informed...He kept me up to date even when the person was being charged, even before media came out about it. He advised me not to read papers or listen to the radio or the TV...I really felt I had a private line straight to him which was good...

(Bernice)

He has been fantastic and I’m still in contact with him...We met up several times before the trial...He kept me informed throughout the whole time and he came down to the funeral as well...He was excellent... I think it was there he gave me all the information leaflets...

(Bernice)

Similarly Paul, whose daughter had been raped and murdered, relied on the liaison officer for support and information.

There was a liaison officer [name]. He was actually very nice...He was here in [town], an extremely nice guy...and very neutral sort of fellow...[He] was very helpful in every situation. He kept me informed the whole time...I went down to see him in the guards' barracks. Anything new that they got they would actually ring and say come down...

(Paul)

Catherine, whose brother had been murdered, had also only positive things to say about the female liaison officer who was assigned to their case. The liaison officer met with Catherine and her other siblings the day after they were told about their brother's death and she was available to answer all the questions they had in relation to the investigation.

I couldn't say a bad word against her...She was brilliant and once they realised that this was a clear cut murder..., their whole attitude changed, I think in the beginning they did think [deceased brother] was some kind of pervert...

(Catherine)

Another interviewee who valued the support from a liaison officer was Gerry, a victim of kidnapping. The kidnappers were caught very quickly after the crime and the investigation also proceeded relatively fast.

[The liaison officer] in fairness kept us well up to speed with everything that transpired ...It was completely positive, we were kept up to speed We weren't in the dark about anything, any court case, court appearance, remanding or bailing, or stuff like that. We knew what was going to happen so we weren't watching TV or anything like that. We knew from them...[liaison officer]. He was a fantastic hero...

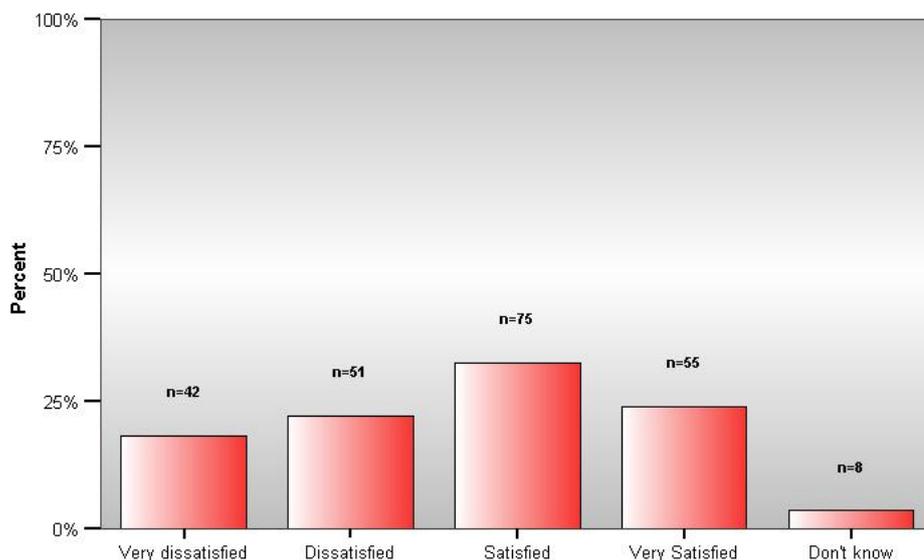
(Gerry)

The above findings clearly highlight the very positive contribution which family liaison officers can make to victim experiences of the criminal justice system.

3.10 Overall satisfaction with the Gardaí

There were 231 valid responses to the question which asked respondents how satisfied they were with their overall dealings with the Gardaí. 40.3% of respondents (93) indicated that they were dissatisfied (51) or very dissatisfied (42). 56.3% of respondents (130) expressed that they were satisfied (75) or very satisfied (55). 8 respondents (3.5%) did not know whether they were satisfied or not.

Fig 3.13: Overall Satisfaction with the Gardaí (Victim Postal Survey)



An overall victim dissatisfaction rating with the Gardaí of 40.3% is high. It is difficult to compare this figure with other studies undertaken, given the differing methodologies, target groups,¹⁹ sample sizes, questions posed and assessment criteria employed. It is still worth noting (and bearing this caution in mind) that the Garda Public Attitude surveys and the Quarterly National Household survey demonstrate much lower dissatisfaction ratings. In 2008 and 2007, for example, the Garda Public Attitude Survey noted that the overall dissatisfaction rating with the Gardaí was 21%.

¹⁹ Our survey, for example, targeted victims who had used victim support organisations, while the Garda Public Attitude Surveys and the Quarterly National Household Survey represented a sample of the general public, with a small proportion of victims.

The figure stood at 20% in 2006 and 2005 (Garda Research Unit 2008: 23). (please see reproduced table below). The Quarterly National Household Surveys of 2006 indicated that 13.2% of respondents rated the performance of the Gardaí in their local area as poor or very poor in 2006. In 2003 this figure stood at 11.5% and in 1998 it was 9.6%. 29.4% of respondents rated local Garda performance as average in 2006; this figure reduced to 28.2% in 2003, and 27% in 1998.

Table 40 Satisfaction with overall contact with the Garda Síochána

Survey	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Total
	%	%	%	%	n
2008	20	59	15	6	3942
2007	20	60	15	6	3829
2006	20	59	14	6	4068
2005	25	55	14	6	4128
2002	27	55	13	4	4012

Some percentages do not sum to exactly 100 due to rounding. Not asked in 2003 and 2004.

Apart from dissatisfaction with the provision of information by the Gardaí in relation to the progress of a case and the lack of information on different services available, which have already been documented, the main reasons for dissatisfaction among the interviewees in this survey can be clustered under the following headings:

(i) Victims Feeling That They Are Not Taken Seriously

Harriet, who had her passport and her daughter’s passport stolen from a hotel room in Dublin, felt that neither the hotel manager nor the Gardaí had taken her seriously.

Really I think the guards made us feel the same as the hotel, that we were the criminals and not the victims...They wouldn’t acknowledge that anything happened...It was almost as if we were trying to cause trouble...that we were a complete nuisance...It was really only when we came home and said “hang on a second there’s something not right about that.

(Harriet)

Ted, who was assaulted by his son-in-law, went for medical treatment immediately after the incident and called to the Garda station the next day to give a full statement. His daughter had taken close-up photographs of his facial injuries and the

investigating Garda also took photographs. Ted feels that it was because of the Garda's photographs that he later lost his case.

I gave a statement in [Garda station] the next day and that was when they took the photographs...but I would recommend...if they take photographs I think they should take them a lot closer. If it's of the face, take them of the face, not of the body....

(Ted)

The person I gave the statement to wasn't the person who had called to the house...He was helpful and respectful, but he just wanted to take a statement and get it finished, that was it, he took down the statement. We went in to a small room and we sat down one to one...He explained different things and then he took the photographs and then he said: "Think about it and if you want to be going over it again" because I was very nervous...But I wanted to go down when the injuries were bad and have the photographs taken...but it wasn't taken serious enough...

(Ted)

Ted could also not understand why the guards treated his son-in-law so leniently.

What I didn't like about it either was the police didn't take him away...They just said "drop around later to the police station the next day"...They left him in the house, they said to him "come around in your own time" which I thought was very wrong...They stayed a minimum couple of minutes...They were in and out...This was what annoyed me with the whole thing, from the word go, from the time they came on the scene, it wasn't taken serious...I was in a lot of pain...I was 66 years of age when this happened, he was 39 so it was a young man beating up an old man...

(Ted)

Kate, another victim of domestic violence, rang the police after her husband attacked her pregnant daughter. She had a safety order in place and was shocked to see that only one male Garda called to the house. Immediately after the arrest Kate brought her youngest daughter to a club where she was going to celebrate her 9th birthday. As she left the club she discovered the squad car with her husband arriving to the centre:

I brought her [daughter] down to the party. She had witnessed what had happened...and as I was leaving the squad car came down to the centre, where the child was, my husband was on the passenger side, the guard pulled up beside me: "I'm just bringing him, he just wants to wish his daughter a happy birthday." And I turned my car and went straight back down. My husband walked into the club on his own...This is a man who had been violent less than an hour...before, to a little girl who had witnessed this violence. The guard followed him in a couple of seconds later and stood outside, so my child

was humiliated that her daddy was there with a police man. The guard had no regard for the family...

(Kate)

(ii) Victim Made To Feel Like The Wrongdoer

Both Clodagh and Heather were victims of domestic violence. They felt they were victimised in having to leave their homes after the violent incidents:

He [brother] put his arms around me...The [female] guard said "would you stay with brother tonight?" So I said "Yeah, no problem at all"...In hindsight I was thinking, why did I have to leave my home?...

(Clodagh)

Heather had a similar experience after phoning the Gardaí late one night. Her partner had assaulted her for hours when she finally managed to ring the local Garda station from the bathroom.

I mean really, what were they thinking of...They begged me to leave the house there and then...Why didn't they take him? I said to myself, hold on a second, I'm moving out of here in a couple of days' time, I'm holding down a job, I have two young kids...All my family live in [west of Ireland]. I have still packing and things to sort out, how can I move out tonight? You know, things had to be done...They never asked him to leave. They asked me to leave and my two children; pull them out of bed in the middle of the night...I don't know why and I didn't know I could ask that question...I assumed that he had every right to be there...

(Heather)

(iii) Victims' Experiences of a Lack of Empathy/Understanding

Catherine whose brother was murdered in his apartment felt that the Gardaí displayed very little understanding of her family's need to be informed about the crime. The crime was reported in the media before the family was informed about it. When Catherine raised the issue with the Gardaí, they argued that they could not inform relatives of the victim until they had investigated the crime scene and as the victim's head was covered with a bag the identity remained unknown. Catherine, however, believes that her family could have been told that a body had been found in their brother's apartment. She also expressed her disquiet about the fact that information about the crime was leaked to the media.

By the time the guards came out to [my brother] and confirmed it...[My daughter] told me: “The guards are involved, there are suspicious circumstances”, and I thought “Oh, my God, finally he’s cracked under the being gay thing and committed suicide”... [My brother] rang me to say what was in the newspaper, and I didn’t even know at that stage how [my brother] had died. Nobody did because there was no post mortem...A very good friend of [my murdered brother] told us that she could not work for five days because she was devastated how we heard. She knew at 6 o’clock on Wednesday evening from the person who found him...The guards’ explanation for it was that [my brother] was lying on the couch and he had a sheet over him and he had a plastic bag over his head...and they had to do...fingerprints...And until the bag was taken off his head they didn’t know it was him. That was their reason, but I mean, couldn’t they have said something to us, someone’s dead in your brother’s apartment...?Who spoke to the papers? When they couldn’t speak to us? We didn’t know at all, his own family...My aunt coming down the train Thursday evening...she could have picked up the Evening Herald... That could have happened...We did go in to see them and that’s the reason they gave us...[A friend of my brother] went in to [the garda station] on Wednesday evening and gave them my phone number and my address...They had that information on Wednesday night...If [my brother] hadn’t rang them on Thursday, when were they going to tell us?...

(Catherine)

Brendan, a victim of domestic violence, was also dissatisfied with the lack of understanding by the Gardaí:

The guards should have better insight to the whole area of what can happen and a better understanding, because I feel that they don’t have enough understanding of it...There’s an awareness of domestic violence, but not proper training...There should be much more awareness, there should be particular people dealing with it, not just any garda that would get the call. It should be specifically trained people who know how to deal with it, who know what services are there.

(Brendan)

One respondent, in answer to the question in the victim survey about how the criminal justice system could be improved, suggested that there should be more training for Gardaí on domestic violence:

[The] Gardaí do not seem to be sufficiently trained to deal with domestic violence cases. It states in their domestic violence policy that there should be “continued liaison with the victim”.

(Victim of domestic violence)

The investigating Garda's familiarity with the defendant and her family was a source of dissatisfaction to Valerie, a victim of dangerous and careless driving.

On the second date in July, that day I watched and observed the behaviour of investigating guard and I was quite interested to see that he was greeted on first name terms by her [the accused] and her family and that made me sit up and think, gosh, and you're the boy who arrested her?...It made me doubt his integrity...

(Valerie)

Another victim of sexual assault, John, initially believed that he had the support of the Gardaí, although he felt extremely vulnerable and exposed giving his statement.

Twenty four hours after [the incident] I went in...The guard came to the hatch and I asked for a gay liaison officer and I was told there wasn't one and that he could deal with me...Once he said he could help me I believed he could...I made a minor statement at that point with brief details...I also gave them evidence, there was also some photographic evidence and stuff taken...by the guards...My housemate who was also a witness was also present with me...I didn't feel that the treatment I got, although they were...on certain levels obviously aware of how difficult this was for me...I still felt that I was overly exposed...I didn't feel that I had the support there that I needed being a gay person...

(John)

John was also frustrated by the fact that he had been trying to contact the investigating garda for several months without any success only to receive a phone-call late on a Friday night informing him that there would be no case at all. John is convinced that this insensitive attitude from the Gardaí related to the fact that he was gay.

Catherine also believes that homophobic prejudices²⁰ influenced Garda attitudes surrounding the murder of her brother who was gay, in particular during the initial investigation.

[The] investigating garda went to school with [my brother]...Is it hard to blame them? We all have prejudices...In [my brother's] case, 'you must be a pervert...maybe you caused it yourself...'

(Catherine)

²⁰ See Garda Research Unit and Kiran Sarma (2004), A Review of Research on victimisation of the gay and lesbian community in Ireland (Research Report No 4/04) (Garda Research Unit, Templemore)

(iv) Lack of Protection and Security

Many victims in this research study also highlighted the need for the Gardaí to be sensitive to the heightened feelings of anxiety they experienced, particularly those who had been intimidated or were vulnerable. In such circumstances the Gardaí should be very conscious of the need to provide an enhanced service which provides advice and support designed to prevent repeat victimisation. Many of the victims in this survey emphasised concerns about their protection and security. For example, Tracy, a victim of domestic violence, continue to receive phone calls from her abuser up to entering the Garda station to report the crime.

I didn't report it first...At the end of it...that last beating I got...[I] rang my Dad [to] come and collect [me]...We had photographs and CD recording of him threatening me...My dad kept on at the guard...I was getting phone calls right up until I was in the Garda station...In the end they [Gardaí] took me into an interview room...I made statement there and then to them...[The Garda] was nice...He was very understanding and compassionate... "We'll arrest him...We know where he lives"...False promises...They didn't...

I think once you get into the guards...they should push help towards [you]...[They should] make sure you have some help, some support...[They should] stay in contact with you regards the case...Protect you more...They could do a lot more to protect the innocent people...A crime is a crime regardless of who you are and what you know...

(Tracy)

Tracy continued to receive phone-calls from her ex-boyfriend even after her visit to the Garda station. She moved back in with her parents and rang the Gardaí several times as he was standing outside the house waiting for her to come out.

They could have picked him up there and then. He told me where he was, he wanted to meet up with me...They could have arrested him...They said they had to put files together...If they had arrested him then the court case mightn't have taken a year...I had to leave my family and everything to get away from him...I was let down by the guards...I had to give up my life...I never got anything...Nothing...All they said was: "we'll pick him up." And they didn't...They didn't give me anything...

(Tracy)

Heather, who also suffered domestic violence, had a similar experience after phoning the guards late one night. Her partner had assaulted her for hours when she finally managed to ring the local garda station from the bathroom.

They [the Gardaí] never went upstairs, never checked the havoc, never checked the children, drawers upside down...[The] guards took no photographs, didn't check the house...They didn't ask were the children alright...They didn't think about my children...

(Heather)

Heather remained in the house that night despite the Gardaí asking her to leave. She had nowhere to go and they did not offer any other advice or support. Furthermore, she felt that her partner had got the anger out of his system at that stage and that she trusted that he would not touch her again. She had already planned to move out of their house and she did this a couple of days later.

Barry, a victim of assault, experienced the investigation process as very long and he was also frustrated that the court case was put off several times due to adjournments. In the meantime he met his attacker on several occasions, something which made him feel very uncomfortable.

I bumped into him [the perpetrator] a few times...before the court case...[The case] dragged on...two years...adjourned back and forth...I know it's a long process...Guards can't do much...I knew it was going to take a long time...I would have liked it if they [the Gardaí] could have kept this guy away from me in the meantime...But nothing happened there...

(Barry)

Ted, who was assaulted by his son-in-law in his daughter's house, had also expected that his assailant would have been arrested immediately. He thinks that the Gardaí did not take it seriously as it was within a domestic setting.

I think if it happened on the street, with two strangers, the person committing the crime would have been detained by the police, not being told "call at your own leisure"...That to me was very flippant...It was a serious crime and no one knew the injuries I had...He should have been charged with attempted murder, but they just looked at it as domestic violence...It's just another row and we let it go...

(Ted)

In the postal questionnaire, one respondent, in response to how the system could be improved, noted the following:

[I] would have liked if the Garda informed me about the refuge when I made the call after being abused. It was a social worker many weeks later. I am sad that I spent those weeks feeling lonely and isolated...I feel that it's hard that the women have to leave the home, and I'm safe here but I can't have a normal life. Yet the men can still have their freedom and women have to hide to be safe.

(Victim of domestic violence)

Another respondent noted:

Victims generally have no voice, a traumatised person is not capable of looking at lists of groups and picking the one that suits...Damaged broken people need more than a help-line. They need a safe place to recover and an assurance that a real effort is being made to round up criminals (in my case the dogs in the street knew who they were).

(Victim of criminal damage, fraud, deception, robbery/burglary)

In contrast, Kylie, also a victim of domestic violence, was very satisfied with the information she received during the investigation process and the instant response from the investigating Garda when she phoned him to say that her ex-boyfriend was outside the house: "All the information I got was spot on...times I had to ring him...he was outside my house...Within ten minutes they were outside my house..."

The data presented above highlights how the specific practices and responses of individual professionals can have a profound impact on the experiences of victims.

3.11 Conclusion

Overall the victim survey indicates that slightly more than 1 in 5 of the respondents did not report the crime and in the majority of cases it is clear when a crime was reported, it was the victim himself or herself who reported it (74% of valid responses from the questionnaire). It is also clear that of those who reported the crime, the majority reported it immediately. This facilitates the investigation of crime, but it also means that the Gardaí should be aware that many victims, when reporting, will be

traumatised and upset by the events that have occurred. Roughly 1 in 10 of the respondents who reported a crime indicate that they did not receive the name of the Garda to whom they reported the crime; 1 in 5 indicated that they did not receive the contact details of the investigating Garda; 1 in 2 indicated that they did not receive the pulse incident number; 1 in every 2 indicated that they did not receive a contact for a group supporting victims; and only 4 in every 10 respondents who reported the crime indicated that they received the number for the Crime Victims Helpline.

There also appears to be variations in practice in terms of the information provided to victims of crime by the Garda at reporting stage. Although roughly only 1 in 10 victims of crime are not receiving the name of the Garda to whom they reported the crime, and 1 in 5 are not receiving the contact details of the investigating Garda, far greater numbers of victims (roughly half) are not receiving the Pulse incident number, a contact for a group supporting crime victims, and a number for the Crime Victims Helpline. These figures are high, particularly so when it is borne in mind that the Gardaí have committed themselves under the Garda Charter for Victims of Crime to provide information on the Crime Victims Helpline or the Irish Tourist Assistance Service (ITAS) and other relevant support organisations. The Garda Charter also commits to providing victims who report a crime with a letter providing them with the name of the investigating Garda, details of how to contact the Garda and details of the PULSE Incident Number and the number of the Crime Victims Helpline or ITAS as appropriate. Furthermore, this research would suggest that victims are not being systematically requested for their permission to have their details referred to a victim support groups. Only 25% of respondents to our postal survey confirmed that a Garda did ask for their consent to pass their details to a group supporting victims of crime. It is not clear from the postal survey whether the remaining 75% were referred to a voluntary sector group or not.

Roughly 7 out of every 10 respondents indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with Garda sensitivity during the statement-taking process. More than 4 in every 10 respondents expressed themselves dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the information provided by the Gardaí during investigation stage. There was an overall victim dissatisfaction rating with the Gardaí of 40.3%. From the qualitative results, it appears that the reasons for the dissatisfaction related to Garda failure to provide

information at reporting and investigation stages, the victim's perception that he or she was not being taken seriously, the victim's perception that he or she was being perceived as the wrongdoer, the lack of empathy or understanding provided by the Gardaí, (particularly in respect of vulnerable groupings such as gay victims), and the lack of protection and security provided to victims.

Finally this research revealed high rates of satisfaction among the small number of respondents who had contact with a Family Liaison Officer. It is clear that of those who used the service, the majority were very satisfied with the support provided.