

Summary

Offenders of Domestic Violence

Backgrounds, objectives, and research questions

Domestic violence is a theme that ranks high on the political and social agendas. As policy makers need recent figures and background information on this problem for the purpose of tackling domestic violence, the Ministries of Justice; Health, Welfare, and Sports; and Social Affairs and Employment requested the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) to set up a national study into the prevalence and backgrounds of domestic violence. The study consisted of three subsidiary studies: a capture-recapture estimation of the scope of the problem; a study into the nature of domestic violence and the characteristics and help-seeking behaviour of *victims*; and a study into the background characteristics, the help-seeking behaviour, and recidivism of *offenders* of domestic violence. This last study was the subject of this report and had the following objectives:

- to gain insight into the background characteristics and problems of domestic violence offenders;
- to provide insight into the help-seeking behaviour of offenders and, if possible, into the backgrounds of domestic violence;
- to determine to what extent domestic violence offenders come into contact with the law again.

These objectives led to the following five research questions:

- 1 What are the background characteristics of domestic violence offenders?
- 2 What are the problems (history of offences, personal circumstances, and personality) that characterise domestic violence offenders?
- 3 What are the help-seeking behaviours of domestic violence offenders?
- 4 What are the characteristics of incidents of domestic violence according to offenders of this violence?
- 5 What is the extent of recidivism of domestic violence offenders?

Domestic violence was defined as violence committed by someone from the victim's domestic circle. This circle includes partners, ex-partners, family members, relatives, and family friends. The term 'violence' was taken to refer to all types of violation of the victim's personal integrity, with a distinction being made between psychological, physical, and sexual violence. The key element of domestic violence is the relationship between the offender and the victim, not where the violence was committed.

In order to answer the research questions, two different research groups were studied: a sample of respondents from the general population and a

group of offenders who had been in contact with the police and the law for domestic violence. The first group was recruited from the Internet panel of Intomart GfK research agency on the basis of a sample that is representative of the Dutch population, whereas the second research group consisted of offenders who had been submitted to a RISC (Recidivism Risk Assessment Scales: the diagnostic instrument used by the probation and after-care organisations to identify criminogenic factors in offenders and to assess their risk of recidivism) by the probation services following criminal proceedings for domestic violence. The first four research questions were studied in both research groups, but the question about the extent of recidivism of domestic violence offenders was only studied in the probation sample.

Although the research group from the general population was based on a sample that is representative of the Dutch population with respect to gender, age, educational level, and region of residence, an important limitation must be noted regarding the generalisability of the results from this research group. The group that reported on domestic violence was after all a selection from this representative sample: only those respondents who had completed an initial questionnaire and who had stated to have used violence against someone from the domestic circle were invited to complete a more detailed, second questionnaire. Within this group of respondents who completed this second questionnaire, a further selection was made to answer the research questions (see below for an explanation). All things considered, the results from the research group from the general population should therefore be interpreted with due care. In principle, the results only give a description of the respondents who participated in this study and generalisations to other domestic violence offenders are nearly impossible. The results from the probation and after-care group are more representative and are more suitable for generalisation, but this only applies to offenders who had been submitted to a RISC.

Domestic violence in a research group from the general population

Research group and research method

For the purpose of the study into the characteristics of domestic violence offenders, a screening was conducted in a representative sample from the online research panel of Intomart GfK research agency. In this screening, respondents were asked to state whether they had committed one or more of 21 types of violence against someone from their domestic circle. The screening questionnaire was submitted to a sample of 9,508 persons from the Intomart online access panel in February 2008 and was completed by 68% of these respondents. Because the number of non-native Dutch respondents was relatively small, the entire questionnaire was submitted to 740 newly recruited non-native Dutch respondents in November 2008.

Out of this group of respondents, 25% responded. In total, the research group that was used in this study into the characteristics of domestic violence offenders consisted of 6,393 respondents. A large majority of the research group (62.8%) stated to have never committed domestic violence, whereas 34.7% stated to have used at least one type of violence against someone from the domestic circle. The remaining 2.4% of the respondents could not remember whether they had ever committed domestic violence or did not want to report on this. 12.0% of the respondents reported to have committed domestic violence in the previous five years.

Both the respondents who stated to have ever committed domestic violence and the respondents who stated to have committed domestic violence in the previous five years, reported to have mainly committed either psychological violence or psychological violence in combination with physical violence. Compared to the total research group, the respondents who stated to have used violence in the domestic circle were more often women, were on average younger, more often had a non-Dutch cultural background, and had a higher educational level than could have been expected based on the distribution of these characteristics in the total research group. In general, though, the differences were small; only the underrepresentation of respondents with Dutch backgrounds and the overrepresentation of respondents with non-Dutch backgrounds had a medium-sized effect size.

The screening questionnaire only asked respondents which types of violence they had used and, if this had occurred in the previous five years, against whom they had used this type of violence. A second questionnaire, the offender questionnaire, was used to identify the characteristics of domestic violence offenders and to describe the offenders' perspective on the backgrounds of the incidents of domestic violence. Once again the online access panel of Intomart GfK was used to submit this questionnaire to people who had stated in the screening questionnaire to have used violence against someone from the domestic circle in the previous five years. Out of the 670 respondents, 456 completed the questionnaire (a response of 68%). After data cleaning, a research group of 391 respondents resulted. However, a considerable number of these respondents only reported a limited amount of minor (psychological) violence which meant that these cases could not actually be referred to as domestic violence. In order to identify the respondents who had committed *evident* domestic violence in the group who completed the offender questionnaire, this group was initially divided into the following three groups on the basis of the type and intensity of the violence reported: incidental psychological violence offenders, incidental physical violence offenders, and structural violence offenders. Although these three groups differed only slightly from each other with respect to their demographic background characteristics, marked differences were in fact found with

respect to the other background characteristics the respondents were asked after. The incidental psychological violence offenders in particular differed from the two other subgroups. They reported fewer victims, stated less often to have (or have had) deviant friends, and were less often involved in (either verbal or physical) violence as offenders outside the domestic circle. Finally, fewer offenders in this group reported problematic substance abuse. Considering the characteristics of the violence reported by this group – only psychological violence, a limited number of different types of violence, and almost exclusively directed towards the partner or ex-partner – and given the differences that existed between the incidental psychological violence offenders and the two other groups of domestic violence offenders, we examined to what extent the group of incidental psychological violence offenders could actually be considered as evident domestic violence offenders. Results from the analyses indicated that only a small part of the group could actually be considered as domestic violence offenders. This group consisted of respondents who had reported four or five types of psychological violence against their victims; respondents who had reported three types of psychological violence of which at least two types related to an exercising type of control over the victims; and respondents who had continually followed or watched their victims. This last type of violence may after all be considered as ‘stalking’ and is punishable by law. The group of evident domestic violence offenders in the research group from the general population thus consisted of three groups: evident psychological violence offenders; incidental physical violence offenders; and structural violence offenders.

Background characteristics of evident domestic violence offenders

The group of evident domestic violence offenders consisted for approximately 60% of women and was on average 38 years of age. Nearly three out of five domestic violence offenders in the research group had a Dutch cultural background, while more than a quarter were of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinam, or Antillean origin. Half of the research group has a higher professional education or university degree, while a third has a senior secondary vocational education diploma, and 12.5% were less well educated. This makes the group of domestic violence offenders very highly educated, as approximately a quarter of the total Dutch population has a higher professional education or university degree. Three out of five domestic violence offenders worked as an employee or was self-employed at the time the violence occurred. The 40% of the offenders who did not work at the time of the domestic violence were school-going, housewives, unemployed, or received a pension or a benefit. In general, the domestic violence offenders stated that they did not have any financial problems or any substance-abuse problems at the time of the violence. More than one third of the domestic violence offenders had been confronted with violence in the domestic circle in their own youth. Half

of these respondents stated to have been a witness and also half of them stated to have been a victim themselves. Nearly one third of the offenders who had been confronted with domestic violence in their youth stated to have been both a witness and a victim. A quarter of the evident domestic violence offenders furthermore stated to have committed violence also outside the domestic circle. The majority of this group stated that this concerned verbal violence, but a quarter of this group stated to have committed (at least) physical violence. The percentage of offenders who reported to have been victims themselves is higher: more than half of the respondents stated to have been a victim of violence outside the domestic circle and out of these offenders, half of them stated that this violence (also) included physical violence. Slightly more than 10% of the domestic violence offenders had been in contact with the police for violence outside the domestic circle or for other violent or non-violent offences. In total, 2% had been in contact with the police for violent offences as well as other offences.

Domestic violence: circumstances and consequences

The majority of evident domestic violence offenders reported to have committed violence against a partner or ex-partner: three out of five evident domestic violence offenders committed this violence against their partner or ex-partner. One out of five respondents reported on violence against a child or a stepchild and nearly a quarter of the offenders reported about violence against another person from the domestic circle. Structural violence offenders completed the offender questionnaire significantly more often with respect to a child or a stepchild than incidental physical violence offenders did.

According to the respondents, the reason for the violence can often be found in conflicts between the offender and the victim and, in particular in the case of incidental physical violence offenders, in an insult or offence by the victim. In addition, the offender's fatigue and own stress levels played a role in many cases. Alcohol or drugs use (by the offenders) was, however, hardly ever mentioned as a cause for the domestic violence. In the perception of the offenders, the domestic violence generally appeared to have had few immediate consequences in terms of injury, absence from school or work, or police intervention. According to the offenders, no more than 5% of the victims stayed at home from school or work, whereas in 15% of the cases the offenders themselves reported to have stayed at home for one or more days from school or work as a result of the violence. Not more than one out of ten of the domestic violence offenders stated to have come into contact with the police as a result of this, and almost nobody stated to have ever been prosecuted by the judicial authorities. Only a minority of the offenders stated that the victim ever sustained injury and only a small number of the victims who had sustained injury received medical aid. According to the offenders, any

injuries were usually limited to injury for which no medical aid appeared to be necessary (grazes and bruises). In addition to the fact that the majority of the domestic violence offenders stated that the violence hardly ever, if at all, resulted in injury to the victim, absence from school and work, or contact with the police, half of the total number of offenders stated that the violence did not result in any serious consequences in other respects either. The other half of the research group did, however, mention (negative) consequences: nearly one out of five offenders stated that the relationship with their partner was terminated as a result of the violence, 18% stated to have become depressed, and a nearly similarly large group (16%) stated they have started to think more negatively about themselves as a result of the violence.

Help-seeking behaviour of domestic violence offenders

Half of the evident domestic violence offenders stated to have discussed this with somebody else. In general, they stated to seek somebody close to them and to talk to their own partner or to family and friends, but half of the offenders who discussed it with others talked to a counsellor. This does not mean, however, that a form of professional help is common: out of all offenders who talked to others, approximately a quarter received help from an agency. The most important reason for offenders to talk about the domestic violence was because they were bothered by it. In addition, half of these people sought help in trying to change the situation. In general, the offenders stated that talking to others was a relief to them and these discussions also produced useful advice to a large number of offenders.

With respect to their help-seeking behaviour, there seem to be a number of meaningful differences between incidental physical violence offenders and structural violence offenders. In both groups, approximately half of the respondents stated to have talked about the domestic violence with somebody else. The incidental physical violence offenders who had talked about it to others, however, stated more often than structural violence offenders that they did this because they were used to talk about things that bothered them. At the same time, these offenders seemed less likely to seek help from official agencies than structural violence offenders. A larger number of them stated not to have received any help or to have felt the need for it. Out of the incidental physical violence offenders who did *not* talk about it to others, a larger number of offenders than in the group of structural violence offenders stated that they would never talk about it to somebody else. When asked for the reasons for not talking about the domestic violence to others, incidental physical violence offenders stated more often than structural violence offenders that the problem had been solved. On the other hand, they less often stated as a reason that they actually did not consider the violence such a problem and neither did they endorse the statement that this type of incidents occasionally happens to

everyone. So, although they sought official help less often and seemed to be less willing to do so than structural violence offenders, it does not seem to be the case that they considered what has happened less serious. On the other hand, it seems as if this group is better able to solve their problems on their own.

In addition to these differences between the groups of incidental physical violence offenders and structural violence offenders, the group of structural violence offenders may be characterised by an interesting heterogeneity. Within the group of offenders who opened up to someone, structural violence offenders' motives to do so highly resembled those of incidental physical violence offenders who talked about it to others. However, structural violence offenders less often than incidental physical violence offenders stated they were used to talk about their problems and an important reason for this group for *not* talking about the domestic violence to others were feelings of shame about their own behaviour. In line with this, a considerable subgroup stated not to have received any help from official agencies while they in fact would have appreciated this. At the same time, there is a group who stated not to consider the domestic violence actually a problem. These offenders also stated more often to be of the opinion that these things just happen. A very tentative conclusion may be that part of the group of structural violence offenders consists of people who consider the use of violence an acceptable way of solving conflicts. In addition, however, the group also consists of people who were ashamed of their behaviour, but who did not succeed in solving their problems themselves and who would have liked to receive have had professional help. On the basis of this study, the differences between incidental physical violence offenders and structural violence offenders and the heterogeneity within the group of structural violence described here must be presented with utmost care. The respondents were after all not asked directly whether they were used to talk to others about things that bothered them. The people were also not asked directly whether they actually considered the violence to be a problem. Both statements were response options to the questions about the reasons for talking or not talking to others about the domestic violence. This study cannot substantiate these results with certainty and it must therefore be emphasised that these findings must explicitly be regarded as something that should be the subject of future research.

A comparison between men and women in the group of evident domestic violence offenders

There appear to be more similarities than differences between male and female evident domestic violence offenders. In general, men and women reported to have committed the 21 different types of domestic violence to the same extent. There are only three significant differences. Firstly, women threatened to terminate the relationship more often than men.

Men, furthermore, stated more often than women to have pushed or grasped the victim in a painful or frightening way. Women in their turn stated more often that they had hit, kicked, bitten, or punched the victim. With respect to the other types of violence, there are no significant differences between men and women. As many men as women furthermore stated that the victim had occasionally sustained injury, nor are there any significant differences with respect to the question whether they themselves or the victim ever stayed at home from school or work. More women than men stated to have been in contact with the police in connection with the domestic violence they committed against the victim about whom they completed the questionnaire (17.0% and 10.6% respectively), but the numbers of respondents are very small and the difference is not significant.

In general, the differences between men and women with respect to the reasons for the domestic violence reported by them are not significant either. What is notable is the fact that women stated more often than men that the cause for the domestic violence was an insult or offence by the victim and that men reported more often than women that the violence occurred because they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In both cases, the differences are, however, rather small. With respect to the consequences caused by the domestic violence, women and men gave nearly similar answers and, although female offenders more often than men reported to have talked to others about the violence (55.6% and 48.0% respectively), this difference is not significant. In addition, men and women reported the same reasons for talking about the domestic violence to others. Although women stated somewhat more often than men that they were used to talk to others about things that bothered them, this difference is not significant. In addition, men and women stated to a similar extent that talking to others had some effect, but in this respect men stated significantly more often than women that they had been given sound advice and that they had learned how to react differently. Finally, the percentage of male offenders that talked to others about the domestic violence and that received help from an official agency is nearly as large as the percentage of women that received official help (26.7% and 22.1% respectively).

Domestic violence in a population of offenders who received probation and after care

Research group and method

The second part of this research report describes the background characteristics and problems of offenders who have been in contact with the law as a result of domestic violence. In this context, a sample was used that had been in contact with probation services because of the offence

committed by them and for whom the probation services conducted a RISC assessment (Recidivism Assessment Scales). RISC is the screening instrument of the Dutch probation services and is used to assess an offender's likelihood of recidivism (defined as a new conviction) and to identify and classify offending-related needs. The results from a RISC assessment provide an offending-related needs profile that identifies the most important factors contributing to re-offending. Accordingly, RISC identifies the criminogenic needs rehabilitation efforts should target to reduce the likelihood of reconviction. RISC is completed by trained probation officers, and is used by probation services to advise the prosecutor and the court, as well as to formulate supervision and rehabilitation plans. For the purpose of this study, a database was used which included all RISCs that had been initiated by the three Dutch probation organisations in the period from November 2004 until early September 2007. An advantage to using the RISC database is that all RISCs administered by the three probation and after-care organisations are stored in this database. As a result, the group of domestic violence offenders from this database forms the *population* of domestic violence offenders who have been in contact with the law and for whom a report to the prosecutor or a rehabilitation plan has been drawn up by the probation services. It should be emphasised, however, that not every offender is submitted to a RISC. Within the group of offenders who have been in contact with the law, the research group will therefore in all probability represent 'more serious' offenders.

The selection of RISC assessments that had been administered for domestic violence offences from the RISC database resulted in a research group of 9,504 RISCs. On the basis of the results of the RISCs, a description could be made of the extent to which domestic violence offenders experienced problems in the areas of living identified by the RISC. In order to obtain more information about the domestic violence as a result of which the research group had come into contact with the law, a file study was furthermore conducted on a random sample of 200 offenders from the total probation sample. Finally, using the WODC Recidivism Monitor we identified to what extent domestic violence offenders had had previous contacts with the law and what percentage of them had been prosecuted as suspects in criminal proceedings again. After linking the RISC file to the databases of the WODC Recidivism Monitor, the research group for the purpose of the recidivism study consisted of 8,877 offenders.

Background characteristics and problems of domestic violence offenders who were prosecuted for this offence

What immediately stands out is the fact that, in the group of domestic violence offenders who had been submitted to a RISC for this offence, women only constituted a very small minority in this judicial group whereas the majority of the victims on the other hand are women. Specifically, victims

mostly were female partners or ex-partners: this group accounts for 67.5% of the total group of victims. The two other substantial groups of victims are parents and parents-in-law (together 10.5%) and children and step-children (8%) of the offenders. Friends of the family, other relatives, and other persons from the domestic circle (e.g. the new partner of one's ex-partner) together account for 7% of the total group of victims. In addition, a considerable percentage of the domestic violence offenders who had come into contact with the law for this reason had committed physical violence as a result of which the victim had sustained injury.

In most separate areas of living assessed with RISC, only a minority of the domestic violence offenders contended with criminogenic problems. The percentage of offenders exhibiting criminogenic needs with regard to accommodation, financial management and income, relationships with friends and acquaintances, drug use, and emotional wellbeing is each approximately 20 to 30%. The areas of living in which the largest groups of offenders was dealing with problems were thinking patterns and behaviour and – not surprisingly – the relationships with partner, family, and relatives. In addition, it is notable that nearly half of the domestic violence offenders had problems with alcohol use and problems with regard to education, work and training. In two out of five domestic violence offenders, their attitude towards society in general and criminal behaviour in particular also constituted a reason for the probation officers to speak of criminogenic problems. According to the probation officers who administered the RISCs, the group of domestic violence offenders is on average characterised by criminogenic problems in four areas of living.

A comparison between the domestic violence offenders and offenders who were submitted to a RISC assessment for other (violent and non-violent) offences shows that the attitude of domestic violence offenders towards society and criminal behaviour is comparable to the attitude of other (violent and non-violent) offenders. However, compared to other (violent and non-violent) offenders, the domestic violence offenders significantly less often associate with 'wrong' friends, they less often have financial problems, they less often contend with problematic drug use, and domestic violence offenders less often have problems regarding education and work. Their alcohol use, however, corresponds to that of violent offenders and this use is more often a reason for concern for probation and after-care workers than is the case with non-violent offenders. Finally, the domestic violence offenders were found to have problems in the areas of thinking patterns and behaviour equally often as other violent offenders, whereas non-violent offenders were less frequently found to have problems in these areas.

Criminal history and recidivism of a judicial group of domestic violence offenders

Seventy percent of the offenders who had come into contact with the police and the law as a result of domestic violence and who had been submitted to a RISC for this offence had previously been in contact with the law. On average, these offenders had previously been prosecuted for a crime more than six times and after their contact with the law as a result of domestic violence, part of this group also came into contact with the law once again. Within two years after the domestic violence case, nearly one third of the offenders had built up at least one judicial case again. Out of *all* recidivism cases in those first two years, the majority related to violent offences. In addition, the domestic violence offenders who reoffended were also often prosecuted for non-violent property crimes, traffic offences, and relatively minor offences such as destruction, minor types of aggression, and offences against public order. Sexual offences, violations of the Opium Act, and violent property crimes occurred relatively rarely. Although domestic violence offenders who were prosecuted for this by the judicial authorities and who had been submitted to a RISC obviously were no strangers to the judicial authorities, their criminal career clearly deviated from the criminal careers of offenders who had been submitted to a RISC for other (violent and non-violent) offences. Domestic violence offenders had a considerably more limited criminal history and were significantly older when they first came into contact with the law. Compared to other offenders who had been assessed with RISC, the criminal history of domestic violence offenders was characterised by a considerably larger proportion of violent and traffic offences. When they came into contact with the law once again which occurred less often than with offenders of other offences – they were also prosecuted – more often for violent and traffic offences than the recidivist offenders who had been submitted to a RISC for other offences.

A comparison between domestic violence offenders in the general population and within the judicial population

It is difficult to compare results from the two research groups described in this report, for the two groups differ widely in nature: the general population sample participated voluntarily in the study whereas the characteristics of the probation sample could be described because they had been prosecuted by the judicial authorities for domestic violence. In addition, the results in the general population sample are based on self-reporting, whereas the information about the background characteristics of the offenders who had been prosecuted by the judicial authorities for domestic violence originates from the probation officers and from official judicial records. In addition, the respondents from the general population

reported on a wide range of behaviours; from relatively minor types of aggression to major and serious violence against someone from the domestic circle. Offenders from the probation sample, on the other hand, had all been prosecuted by the judicial authorities for domestic violence. The behaviour they exhibited was therefore probably more serious than many types of behaviour reported by the respondents from the general research group. As a result, both the nature of the study samples and the methods of collecting the data make it difficult to compare these two groups, but there are nevertheless a number of interesting differences that warrant closer consideration.

The percentage of men and women in the two research groups

One of the most striking differences between the research groups from the general population and the probation and after-care population is the fact that the former group consisted of more women than men (57.8% versus 42.2%), whereas the second group consisted nearly only of men (93.1% were men). In addition, the majority of the victims of the offenders from the probation and after-care group were women. The general population sample was not specifically asked to report the gender of the victim with regard to whom they completed the second questionnaire, but on the basis of the percentage of respondents that completed the questionnaire regarding a partner or ex-partner, it may be assumed that female victims were far less overrepresented in this research group than in the probation sample (assuming that the majority of relationships were heterosexual). Regardless, as the group of offenders from the general population also consisted of offenders of evident violence, this means that women also stated to have exhibited behaviours that may unreservedly be considered domestic violence. There are, however, no significant differences between men and women concerning the degree in which they stated that the cause for the domestic violence could be found in the victim's aggression or in the victim's attempts to control the respondent's life. It is therefore not obvious to assume that the violence reported by women in general population sample would primarily have been committed as a reaction to violence committed by the victim. Moreover, the comparison between male and female domestic violence offenders in the general population sample also shows that there are more similarities than differences between them. In addition, in terms of effect size, the differences that can be found are generally rather small. Still, the domestic violence that was prosecuted by the judicial authorities primarily concerned violence that was committed by male offenders against female victims. The most probable explanation for the strongly divergent distribution of men and women in the two research groups seems to be that, although both men and women committed evident domestic violence and this did not result in injury in the majority of cases, the more serious types of injury were caused more often by men as a result of which predominantly

men came into contact with the police and the law for domestic violence. As such, the results of this study are consistent with the conclusions of international longitudinal and epidemiological research.

Problematic alcohol use and problems related to education and work in the two research groups

Rather striking is the fact that in the probation and after-care group problematic alcohol use appears to occur much more often than in the research group from the general population. Whereas approximately 40% of the offenders who had been prosecuted by the judicial authorities for domestic violence had problems in the area of alcohol use (and these problems were also related to the offence according to the probation and after-care workers who administered the RISC), only a minority of the offenders from the general population sample stated that alcohol use played a role in the domestic violence reported by them. Unfortunately, it was not possible to check to what extent the offenders in the general population sample underreported or trivialised their own substance use, but it would be interesting to study this in a follow-up study. If it is true that alcohol use in a general research group, where domestic violence did not often result in injury, played only a limited role, whereas it was a considerable problem in a judicial research group, which resulted in injury much more often, it could be that alcohol use plays a role in the fact that arguments and conflicts get out of hand.

A final striking difference between offenders from the general research group and those from the probation and after-care group relates to education and work. Out of the probation and after-care group, 40% have criminogenic problems in the area of education and work, whereas half of the population group has a higher professional education or university degree. Work does not seem to have been a problem either in this group. An explanation for the difference may be found in various areas, but there are indications that highly educated persons were more willing to participate in this study and were more willing to report about their capacity of being an offender. This emphasises once more that the results from the general population sample must be interpreted with utmost care.

Final conclusion

The most important conclusion from this study seems to be that both men and women commit evident domestic violence. However, as unpleasant and far-reaching this violence might be, it seldom results in serious consequences in terms of injury, absence from education or work, or intervention by the police and the judicial authorities. When police and judicial authorities do intervene, however, cases usually involve a type of violence that resulted in injury, with typically the female partner sus-

taining serious injury. The fact that cases such as these concern a group of offenders who exhibit rather deviant behaviour is emphasised by the finding that the group of offenders who had been prosecuted for domestic violence (and who were submitted to a RISC) were not unknown to the judicial authorities. Most Dutch citizens do not have any registered crimes, let alone that they have six registered crimes at the average age of 38 years before being prosecuted for domestic violence. One of the most important questions for a follow-up study therefore seems to be which characteristics of offenders, victims, and incidents of domestic violence are related to the escalation of domestic violence.