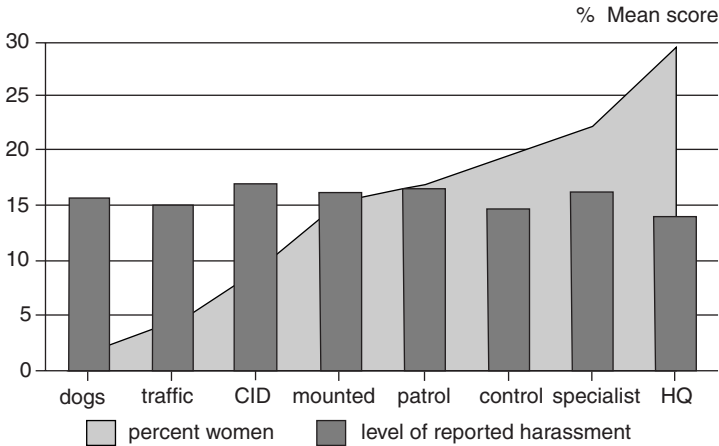


**Figure 4** Percentage of women officers and levels of harassment experienced



Source: Adapted from Brown (1998, p. 273).

### Impact on police women of informal occupational culture

#### *Acceptance*

Despite their having been involved in law enforcement since before World War I, American policewomen still find being fully accepted by male colleagues problematic. Janus, Janus, Lord and Power (1988) reported that only 8 per cent of policewomen felt fully accepted by their male colleagues whilst 62 per cent thought they were mostly accepted. In a survey of Ohio policewomen, Youngblood (1993) found that only 1 per cent of policewomen felt they were fully accepted by male colleagues with 20 per cent indicating they were mostly accepted, 53 per cent somewhat accepted and 31 per cent that they were accepted with difficulty. Daum (1994) reported that 42 per cent of policewomen from a municipal department did not feel accepted by male officers and 55 per cent reported that they were not accepted by male supervisors. Lunneborg (1989) reviews the reasons for this continued lack of acceptance which is related to performance capabilities: women were still perceived by men to be better at handling matters dealing with women and

children and sexual offences and were less likely to be thought able to manage violent situations or back up male officers when confronting violence. Women are also still perceived to be physically incapable of handling all police tasks (Daum 1994). Similar attitudes are reported in surveys of police forces in Scotland (Wilkie and Currie 1989), England (Coffey, Brown and Savage 1992), New Zealand (Waugh 1994), Australia (French and Waugh 1998) and Canada (Walker 1993).

However there are some indications of change. Gossett and Williams (1998, p. 68), in a qualitative study of a South West American Metropolitan police department, noted:

there was a consensus among the women interviewed that law enforcement has changed with the times, that discrimination of the past is not present in the same form today. Discrimination as perceived today is subtle and less overt than in the past. [However] even while acknowledging progress, the majority of female officers, almost two thirds, perceived discrimination against women in law enforcement today.

Trzcinska (1996) indicates that Polish women officers are scarcely tolerated by their male colleagues. She writes 'even when uniform was assigned, women were treated as decorative and office material. In a skirt and on high heels it is difficult to catch the bus, so pursuing a criminal is certainly out of the question'. The prejudices of Polish policemen look remarkably like those of their Western European counterparts. Trzcinska (1998, personal communication) suggests, however, there to be not only a decline in women recruits into police training but also return of the mentality that women are better at home having babies and looking after the family.

Gütges (1998) paints a not dissimilar picture of the experience for women officers in former DDR German States (Brandenburg, Mecklenberg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt and Thüringen). From interviews with women officers who worked in these States before and after Unification, she reports an improvement in recruitment practices although provision of child care has declined. Women, however, saw no differences in their occupance of management positions in the DDR and New States:

management positions are rarely given to women and there is very little change today. The women see the reason for that in the dual role they are expected to fulfil, that of working wife and mother. Women who have a family are worn out doing two jobs. Men with a family tend to rely on their wives to take care of

children. The results of this traditional approach is that men are able to spend more time and effort developing their careers, whereas the women are morally expected to remain at home at the expense of their own careers

Policewomen also report that men persist in their prejudices about their potential as managers and that there is an absence of role models in the workplace. In terms of their experience of sexual harassment, many indicated that they did not consider sexual jokes or obscene comments as harassment: rather, that women employed in a culture dominated by men should accept such remarks.

### *Sexual harassment*

In the early 1990s, several studies had revealed high levels of sexual harassment occurring within forces in England and Wales (Young 1991; Anderson, Brown and Campbell 1993; HMIC 1992). These suggested an endemic sexism in which ‘nine out of ten police women sometimes or often hear sexually explicit comments or suggestive jokes about women’ (Anderson, Brown and Campbell 1993, p. 81) with policemen being ‘overtly and consistently hostile towards women in “the job”’ (Young 1991, p. 193). In an unpublished paper, Young (1996) itemizes some of the epithets used to describe women officers: split arse, treacle (tart), slapper, bitch, turtle, P.I.K. (Pig in knickers). HMIC for England and Wales recognized the ‘serious problem of sexual harassment’ (HMIC 1992, p. 16) within the service. In 1998, a former Thames Valley detective, Dee Mazurkiewicz successfully pursued a sexual harassment claim. She described, amongst her experiences, being nicknamed ‘massive cleavage’ – a pun on her surname (*Police Review*, 22 May 1998). In addition, she described in a radio interview (23 November 1998) how her sergeant claimed that she obtained successful confessions from suspects because ‘you get your boobs out’. Fellow officers gossiped about how she had sex with the criminal fraternity in order to achieve her impressive clear-up rate. Her descriptions of the attitudes and behaviour of her male superior officers and colleagues hark back to the claims made in the 1940s and 1950s discussed in the previous chapter.

Not all surveys report finding examples of sexual harassment. In a thematic inspection on equal opportunities within Scottish Police Forces, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary reported that

'female officers commented during pre inspection on having seen reports of the findings in England and Wales did not recognise the culture said to be prevalent there' (p.17). The Inspection concluded that if acceptable banter overstepped the mark, 'where female officers did not intervene other male officers would be quick to do so on her behalf' (HMIC 1993, p. 17). Moreover, the low incidence of unacceptable behaviours was accounted for by 'the strong influence of Scottish religious tradition.' and teamwork, bringing about 'a healthy atmosphere between colleagues of the opposites sex' (p. 18).

Other jurisdictions within the British Isles do report high levels of sexual harassment. A survey conducted within the RUC reported that 'a high proportion of female officers had suffered some form of harassment' (HMIC 1997, p. 28). Stalker (1988, p. 68) had described language used by RUC policemen when referring to HQ-based policewomen reminiscent of that reported by Young (1991): 'bitch squad, the hen house or cow shed'. A more recent study by Brewer (1991b, p. 237) concluded that RUC policewomen felt they were 'fair game as sex objects', and that policewomen 'have jokes made about their bodies, have to listen to dirty jokes, have passes made at them, and are the subject to some sexual harassment from low-level officers (having their waists pinched, arms put round them, comments made as to their appearance)'. Burman and Lloyd (1993, p. 38) reported that Scottish women officers engaged in child protection work were referred to as 'the fanny squad, the nappy squad, and the women's and weans group'.

There is little evidence available on the existence of a macho police culture in the Garda Síochána. McCullagh (1996, p. 151) concludes that 'in the absence of the relevant research we do not know the extent to which such a sub culture can be found among gardai.' However, O'Mahony (1996, p. 131) demonstrates that since the late-1980s, there has been a severe crises of moral, mission and identity and concludes. 'Relations between Garda and its community have been seriously damaged – perhaps permanently – by the headlong rush into a macho attitude to crime fighting, by the infatuation with machinery and technology and by the abandonment of, or at least the devaluation of, the old priorities of community service.'

There is evidence for the presence of sexual harassment in Belgium (Corryn 1994), Denmark (Ibsen Froslee, cited in Hazenberg and Ormiston 1995) and Holland (Eikenaar 1993). In the United States, the occurrence of sexual harassment is reported by Daum

(1994), Jacobs (1988), Pendergrass and Ostrove (1984), Wexler and Logan (1983).

Kersten (1996) suggests a link between reported rates of sexual assault and the rise in sexual assault victimization. Kersten proposes that the particularly virulent form of 'aggressive masculinity' in Australia means that violence as the way to resolve disputes is condoned. Kersten concludes (1996, p. 391):

the extreme visibility of Australia's 'uncontrollable and dangerous' men has to be deciphered against a background of a deep social, cultural, and economic crisis on the fifth continent which has repercussions for gender relations. The seemingly self evident construct of an Australian 'national masculinity' with an emphasis on physical prowess and independence is crumbling.

As a result, Kersten, argues Australian men compensate by using practices reliant on physical strength where the weaker and despised object, women, children and homosexuals, are dehumanized and victimized. In other words, physical and sexual assault become facts of daily life acting to compensate for losses in hegemonic masculinity. Since the police represents 'an almost pure form of hegemonic masculinity' (Fielding 1994, p. 47) there is no reason to suppose that Australian women police officers are not subjected to sexual harassment. This was indeed found to be the case by Sutton (1996) who reports levels higher to that found in the UK and Holland.