Domestic abuse is a gendered crime

Every case of domestic abuse should be taken seriously and each individual given access to the support they need. Any form of violence is unacceptable.

Both women and men can experience domestic abuse. However, there are significant differences (in terms of the frequency and the nature of the abuse) between domestic abuse experienced by men and domestic abuse experienced by women. Domestic abuse perpetrated by men against women is a quantitatively and qualitatively distinct phenomenon rooted in women's unequal status in society and oppressive social constructions of gender and family.

- Women are far more likely than men to be killed by partners/ex-partners. In 2013/14, this was 46% of female homicide victims killed by a partner or ex-partner, compared with 7% of male victims.¹

- In the three year period 2011/12 to 2013/14 all but one of the women killed by their partner or ex-partner were killed by a male suspect. Around a third of male victims (killed by partner/ex-partner) were killed by a male suspect and most of these were perpetrated by a male “emotional rival” (for example the husband of the male victim’s lover). ²

- One study of 96 cases of domestic abuse recorded by the police found that men are significantly more likely to be repeat perpetrators and significantly more likely than women to use physical violence, threats, and harassment. In a six year tracking period the majority of recorded male perpetrators (83%) had at least two incidents of recorded abuse, with many having a lot more than two and one man having 52 repeat incidents. Whereas in cases where women were recorded as the perpetrator the majority (62%) had only one incident of abuse recorded and the highest number of repeat incidents for any female perpetrator was eight. The study also found that men’s violence tended to create a context of fear and control; which was not the case when women were perpetrators.³

- A study involving in-depth interviews with couples affected by intimate partner violence (95 men and 95 women) found strong gender asymmetry in experiences of domestic abuse. Both the quantitative and qualitative evidence suggested that, apart from a few men who had suffered serious injuries, men tended to view the domestic abuse by female perpetrators as “relatively inconsequential and of no lasting effect”, whereas female victims
of domestic abuse by men tended to express “fear, bewilderment and helplessness.”

- An evaluation of four Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) schemes in London found that (over a two year period from 2007–2009) the vast majority of service-users were female, and almost all perpetrators were male. There was a male perpetrator and a female victim in 675 out of 748 cases (90.2%); a female perpetrator and a male victim in only eight cases; in six cases both the perpetrator and the victim were male; and in 14 cases both the perpetrator and the victim were female. In two cases the perpetrator was male and victim was transgender. In the rest of the cases there are data missing on the gender of the perpetrator. (Please note that not all of these cases were about intimate partner violence; in 43 cases the perpetrator was a family member.)

- The 2013/14 Crime Survey for England and Wales found that for a significant proportion of female victims of serious sexual assault (47%), the offender was a partner / ex-partner.

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