

# 58% OF DEATHS RELATING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE IN NORTHERN IRELAND ARE MEN (AND OTHER REALITIES)

Male victims are not just invisible in policy; they are dying in the gaps.

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# MEN'S ALLIANCE

## NORTHERN IRELAND

Against Domestic Abuse

## Executive Summary:

This report presents an evidence based assessment of domestic abuse as it affects men in Northern Ireland. It has been prepared by survivors, practitioners, and data analysts to inform policy makers of a long standing and unresolved inequality. The purpose is not to diminish violence against women and girls. It is to show, clearly and transparently, that male victims exist in significant numbers, face systemic barriers, and are dying in the context of domestic abuse without recognition in policy, services, or data systems.

The central finding is stark. When domestic homicides and estimated domestic abuse related suicides are considered together, approximately 58 percent of deaths where domestic abuse is a major factor are male, compared to 42 percent female, over the period 2007 to 2025. This estimate combines PSNI domestic homicide data with NISRA suicide statistics, using conservative and published research based proportions to identify domestic abuse related suicides. Even when assumptions are adjusted downward for men, the overall conclusion remains that deaths linked to domestic abuse are at least evenly shared and are likely majority male.

On homicides alone, PSNI data shows that 41 percent of domestic homicide victims are men. These deaths receive little public or policy attention. Once suicides are included, the scale of male mortality becomes clearer. Men account for around 75 to 80 percent of all suicides in Northern Ireland. Applying conservative estimates from national research indicates that hundreds of these deaths over the last two decades are linked to domestic abuse, coercive control, false allegations, and loss of contact with children. Northern Ireland does not currently record domestic abuse involvement in suicide data, leaving a major part of the harm invisible.

The report also shows that men make up around 35 percent of recorded domestic abuse victims in Northern Ireland, and this proportion has increased steadily over the last twenty years. Yet more than half of male victims never disclose their abuse

to anyone, and only a small minority who report to police feel believed or supported. Seventy one percent of male victims have considered suicide. Around half report losing their job or leaving employment as a direct result of abuse. There is no refuge in Northern Ireland for men and their children fleeing domestic abuse.

Justice system data highlights further inequality. Around 28 percent of police identified domestic abuse suspects are female, yet only around 9 percent of convictions are of female defendants. Female suspects are significantly more likely to receive diversionary outcomes rather than prosecution. This creates a clear funnel where abuse by women, including abuse of men and other women, is less likely to result in conviction. The report does not argue for reduced consequences for male perpetrators. It argues for equal recognition and accountability where men are victims.

The report identifies persistent structural failures. There is no integrated data pipeline linking police, prosecution, and court outcomes by sex of victim and defendant, unlike in England and Wales. Domestic abuse related suicides are not identified in official statistics. Training for police and practitioners remains heavily gendered, defaulting to male perpetrator and female victim assumptions.

Commissioned services and public messaging largely exclude men, reinforcing stigma and under reporting. These gaps have been known since a major government commissioned study in 1998, yet the same recommendations reappear in the 2024 Victims Commissioner research, largely unimplemented.

The policy message is clear. Domestic abuse in Northern Ireland is not a single sex issue. Current strategies do not reflect the evidence and fail a substantial group of victims. The report calls for substantial and long term core funding for specialist services for men. The report calls for an official, data pipeline linking PSNI, PPS, courts, and NISRA, including identification of domestic abuse related suicides. It calls for male inclusive services, including safe accommodation for men and their children. It calls for reform of justice training and scrutiny of diversion and

sentencing patterns. Finally, it recommends the establishment of a standing advisory group on male victims of domestic abuse to ensure ongoing oversight, accountability, and implementation.

Male victims are not just invisible in policy. They are dying in the gaps.

## (1) Introduction

This report has been prepared by a group of survivors, practitioners and data analysts concerned with the treatment of, and lack of services and support for, male victims of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland.

Our purpose is not to deny or minimise violence against women and girls. Rather, it is to provide the Executive Office and the wider Northern Ireland Executive with a clear, evidence-based picture of how domestic abuse affects men as well as women, how the justice system responds, and where current strategies and data systems fail to reflect that reality.

We are not asking that female victims of domestic abuse receive any less support, funding, public sympathy or resources. To the contrary, we at Men's Alliance firmly believe that **all** victims of domestic abuse deserve to be treated with dignity, empathy, support and equity, regardless of their sex. Our concern is not that women receive too much help, but that men receive too little.

The evidence presented in this report demonstrates that:

- Male victims exist in significant numbers
- They face specific and systemic barriers to recognition and support
- The justice system treats male and female perpetrators differently, therefore not recognising their victims equally
- Men are dying in the context of domestic abuse at rates at least comparable to, or exceeding, women

- 🔗 These facts have been known for over a quarter of a century, yet policy has failed to respond

This is not a competition between male and female victims. It is a call for evidence-based, equitable policy that recognises and responds to the reality of domestic abuse as it affects all victims, regardless of sex. The question is not whether we care about women. The question is whether we care enough about the evidence to change how we respond to male victims and their children.

## (2) NI Specific Statistics

### a. 58% of Deaths relating to Domestic Abuse in NI are men.

Tragically as we are well aware men account consistently for 75-80% of suicides in Northern Ireland, and a large portion of those are due to their domestic abuse, issues around child contact, Child Maintenance payments and false allegations to Police, Social Service and Courts. This is an invisible loss when it comes to Statistics, and Domestic Abuse Victims, a subject that is never discussed.

#### I. Overview of data sources

- 🔗 PSNI domestic homicide statistics

Official domestic homicide statistics by sex used to establish domestic abuse related deaths. - <https://www.psni.police.uk/system/files/2025-12/966808321/Domestic%20Abuse%20Incidents%20and%20Crimes%20in%20Northern%20Ireland%202004-05%20to%202024-25.xlsx>

- 🔗 NISRA Suicide Statistics

Official annual counts of suicides in Northern Ireland, by sex, used to estimate domestic-abuse-related suicides. – See table 16. Suicide figures are around 18% higher in NI than in England, with men accounting annually for 75-80% of the total. -

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/files/nisra/documents/2025-11/Suicide%202024%20Tables%20Accessible.xlsx>

### Suicides Related to Domestic Abuse

Male - National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health, by Manchester University established that 7% reported being a victim of domestic/intimate partner violence as middle aged men. There is no NI research into this area. - see page 18 . We believe this figure in reality to be considerably higher in NI -

<https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=55305>




Female – Womens Aid Northern Ireland reported to the Health Committee that 12.5% of suicides of women related to Domestic Abuse -

[https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2017-2022/health/responses-to-calls-for-evidence/domestic-abuse-and-family-proceedings-bill/submission-from-womens-aid-federation-ni/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/2017-2022/health/responses-to-calls-for-evidence/domestic-abuse-and-family-proceedings-bill/submission-from-womens-aid-federation-ni/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

Please see Source Data table in section 6.

## II. Definitions and scope

For the purposes of this brief:

-  Domestic abuse incident: an incident recorded by PSNI as domestic abuse-related, whether or not a crime is ultimately recorded.
-  Domestic abuse crime: a notifiable crime recorded by PSNI with a domestic abuse flag.
-  Domestic homicide: a homicide where the victim and perpetrator had a current or former intimate/family relationship and the case is flagged accordingly by PSNI.

- 🌐 Domestic-abuse-related suicide (estimate): a suicide where domestic abuse is a significant contributing factor. Because Northern Ireland does not currently identify these explicitly in official stats, we apply external evidence-based proportions to NISRA suicide totals to estimate likely numbers.

**Domestic-abuse-related deaths**, the sum, by sex, of:

- (1) Domestic homicides; and
- (2) Estimated domestic-abuse-related suicides.

The “58% of deaths relating to domestic abuse are men” headline refers to this combined measure over the period 2007/08–2024/25.

### III. Estimating domestic-abuse-related suicides: Method and working

Northern Ireland does not currently identify domestic-abuse-related suicides in official statistics. To estimate them, we combine:

NISRA suicide statistics by sex (2007–2024)

Using the official published suicides for this period, we sum suicides for the period 2007-2024:

- 🌐 Total male suicides 2007–2024: 3,402

- 🌐 Total female suicides 2007–2024: 1,058

Published estimates of the proportion of suicides linked to domestic abuse

There is no NI specific figure, but two sources give reasonable, conservative percentages:

- 🌐 Women’s Aid NI evidence to the Assembly suggests that around 1 in 8 female suicides (12.5%) are domestic-abuse-related.

- The National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health (NCISH) report Suicide by middle-aged men (University of Manchester, 2021) found that 7% of the men in their national sample who died by suicide had been victims of domestic or intimate partner violence. We use the 7% ‘victim’ figure as a conservative estimate of domestic-abuse-linked suicides among men.

We therefore apply:

- 12.5% (0.125) to female suicides
- 7% (0.07) to male suicides

### Step-by-step calculation

Female DA-related suicides:

- Total female suicides 2007–2024 = 1,058
- Estimated DA-linked proportion = 12.5%
- Calculation:  $1,058 \times 0.125 = 132.25$
- Rounded:  $\approx$  **132 domestic-abuse-related suicides of women**

Male DA-related suicides:

- I. Total male suicides 2007–2024 = 3,402
- II. Estimated DA-linked proportion = 7%
- III. Calculation:  $3,402 \times 0.07 = 238.14$
- IV. Rounded:  $\approx$  **238 domestic-abuse-related suicides of men**

### Sensitivity check

These proportions are conservative. To test robustness, we can change the assumptions:

If male DA-linked suicides were only 5% and female remained at 12.5%, then:

- Female DA-related suicides  $\approx 1,058 \times 0.125 = 132$
- Male DA-related suicides  $\approx 3,402 \times 0.05 = 170$
- Men would still be a slight majority of DA-related deaths once homicides are added.

Only if we assume both a lower male proportion and a significantly higher female proportion (e.g. 5% vs 15%) do women come out slightly higher overall.

In other words, the conclusion that domestic-abuse-related deaths are at least balanced, and likely majority male, is robust across a range of reasonable assumptions.

#### IV. Limitations

- These are estimates, not official NISRA categories.
- They rely on applying GB-based research proportions to the NI male suicide totals.
- They should therefore be treated as indicative, not exact, but they are transparent, reproducible, and use the same method for men and women.
- They cannot capture all the complexities of causation in individual cases.

However, they are:

- Transparent (all steps and numbers are shown)
- Reproducible (any analyst can follow and rerun the calculations)
- Symmetrical (the same method is applied to men and women)

Until NISRA explicitly records domestic-abuse involvement in suicide data, this kind of estimate is the best available way to understand the true mortality burden of domestic abuse on both sexes.

## V. Domestic Homicides by Sex of Victim

PSNI domestic homicide statistics (2007/08-2024/25) show that over this period there were:

- 72 female domestic-homicide victims
- 45 male domestic-homicide victims

So, on homicides alone:

- Around 62% of domestic-homicide victims are females
- Around 38% are males

This is the “intimate partner homicide is majority female” picture. However, it only captures cases that meet the legal definition of homicide and are flagged as domestic. It does not include suicides where domestic abuse was a major contributing factor.

## VI. Conclusion

Total DA-related deaths: Females

- DA-related suicides  $\approx 132$
- Domestic homicides = 72
- $132 + 72 = 204$  (rounded from 204.25)

Total DA-related deaths: Males

- DA-related suicides  $\approx 238$

• Domestic homicides = 45

•  $238 + 45 = 283$  (rounded from 283.14)

Overall total:

•  $204$  (women) +  $283$  (men)  $\approx 487$  deaths where domestic abuse is a major factor.

Proportions

Men:  $283 \div 487 \approx 58\%$

Women:  $204 \div 487 \approx 42\%$

So, the most accurate estimate is:

**Around 58% of deaths where domestic abuse is a major factor are male, and 42% are female.**

## VII. The Tragic Cost in Human Terms

In the context of government policy and for Officials to consider, the key point is not a competition about whose deaths “count more”. It is that:

• Hundreds of people have died in Northern Ireland over the last two decades where domestic abuse was a central factor.

• An estimated 283 of those deaths are men, and many of those men will have been:

• Fathers in high-conflict separations.

• Men facing false allegations.

• Men facing abuse, alone.

• Men with no meaningful access to services that recognised them as victims.

Yet:

- There is no NI suicide strategy that explicitly tackles domestic abuse as a driver.
- There is no substantial core funding for services.
- There is no refuge for men and their children escaping abuse.
- Most domestic abuse policy documents do not even recognise related male suicide, despite this scale.
- The discussion around Domestic Abuse related Deaths excludes males.
- Northern Ireland does not currently tag suicides as “domestic-abuse-related” in its official statistics.
- A non-trivial proportion of suicides are directly linked to domestic abuse, particularly where victims experience prolonged coercive control, financial abuse, and loss of children.

**This is why we say male victims are not just invisible in policy; they are dying in the gaps.**

Over the last 18 years, approximately 58% of deaths where domestic abuse is a significant factor are male deaths.

Important notes for Ministers:

This is an evidence-based estimate, not an official statistic, because:

- NI does not currently identify DA-related suicides in formal NISRA outputs.
- We therefore had to build this estimate ourselves using published research methods and NI data.

Even if the true figure were somewhat lower or higher, the central message is unchanged; Men are dying in large numbers in the context of domestic abuse, yet policy, funding and public messaging treat domestic abuse almost exclusively as a violence-against-women issue.

### What we can say with certainty:

- 🔗 Across a range of reasonable assumptions drawn from published research, it is not credible to treat DA-related deaths as a “women only” issue.
- 🔗 Using conservative central estimates (7% for men, 12.5% for women), the balance of DA-related deaths in NI is 58% male vs 42% female.
- 🔗 Even if we heavily discount the male proportion, men still account for at least half of DA-related deaths in most plausible scenarios.

The honest position is therefore that domestic homicide alone is majority female, but once we include domestic-abuse-related suicides, the overall burden of death is shared at least equally and very likely falls more heavily on men.

## VIII. Source Data Tables

Source Data as specified in section 1

	DA Related	0.125	12.50%	DA Related	0.07	7%
	Female			Male		
	Suicides		Homicides	Suicides		Homicides
Year	Total	DA Related	Total	Total	DA Related	Total
Apr 2007-Mch 08	67	8	7	175	12	4
Apr 2008-Mch 09	64	8	2	218	15	6
Apr 2009-Mch 10	55	7	3	205	14	5
Apr 2010-Mch 11	73	9	6	240	17	1
Apr 2011-Mch 12	73	9	2	216	15	3
Apr 2012-Mch 13	63	8	2	215	15	3
Apr 2013-Mch 14	74	9	6	229	16	2
Apr 2014-Mch 15	61	8	5	207	14	2
Apr 2015-Mch 16	47	6	1	173	12	0
Apr 2016-Mch 17	46	6	2	149	10	1
Apr 2017-Mch 18	48	6	7	151	11	4
Apr 2018-Mch 19	60	8	4	176	12	0
Apr 2019-Mch 20	50	6	2	155	11	3
Apr 2020-Mch 21	59	7	7	160	11	1
Apr 2021-Mch 22	61	8	4	176	12	5
Apr 2022-Mch 23	47	6	5	156	11	3
Apr 2023-Mch 24	50	6	1	171	12	2
Apr 2024-Mch 25	60	8	6	230	16	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1058</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>3402</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Total Female</b>	204	41.91%	<b>Total Male</b>	283	58.09%	
<b>Total DA Related Deaths</b>	487					

### b. 41% of domestic homicide victims are male

PSNI Statistics show that in the period 2007 to 2024 there were a total of 117 Domestic Homicides in Northern Ireland, 72 female and 45 male.

The conclusion is that 41% of domestic homicide victims are male, yet we never hear about them in the media, or an outcry about the numbers.

As a society we should be equally concerned about the male murders, but it seems that it is less important because the majority (Not all) are murdered by other males.

Does this mean we are perpetrator-focused and not victim-focused?

Does a man's life mean less if murdered by another man?

At Mens Alliance we believe that all victims should be equal.

Source PSNI Annual Reports - <https://www.psnipolice.uk/system/files/2025-12/966808321/Domestic%20Abuse%20Incidents%20and%20Crimes%20in%20Northern%20Ireland%202004-05%20to%202024-25.xlsx>

## c. 71% of male victims of abuse have considered suicide as an escape

The Victims Commissioner Report of November 2024 Male Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence Study reported that 71.4% of men who have experienced abuse had considered suicide.

This could be due to their abuse, alienation from their children, ongoing Court battle and costs, Child Maintenance issues, or False Allegations – or because of all of them.

See Page 11 and 47, Section 3.3.3 Suicidality - <https://www.cvocni.org/files/cvocni/2024-11/ME-IPV%20Report%20November%202024%20Website%20Version.pdf>

## d. 35% Of Victims of Domestic Abuse are Male

The PSNI release annual figures on Domestic Abuse, giving basic details on the breakdown behind the headline figures.

It is broken into 2 tiers:

🔍 Incidents, this is the number of reports received, generally not broken down to male and female and this information is accessed through Freedom of Information. (approx 30,000 per year)

🔍 Crimes, generally 2/3 of incidents are identifiable crimes, these are reported with a victim sex specified, but perpetrator sex is only accessed through Freedom of Information. (Approx 20,000 per year)

**It is important to note**, when considering Crime figures it is the number of Crimes, NOT the number of victims. As multiple crimes can be logged against one victim, the number of individuals this applies to is only able to be accessed through Freedom of Information.

## I. Data Source

The Data Set is available from the PSNI Web Site, with quarterly updates, and a more detailed annual report.

Current reports available here - <https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics/domestic-abuse-statistics>

## II. Data Used

For the calculation of the 35% of victims of domestic abuse are male we have sourced the data from FOI Request No F-2024-01300

🔍 6,361 crimes identified against 5268 men. (Avg 1.21 crimes per male)

🔍 13,379 crimes identified against 9845 women. (Avg 1.36 crimes per female)

## III. Calculations

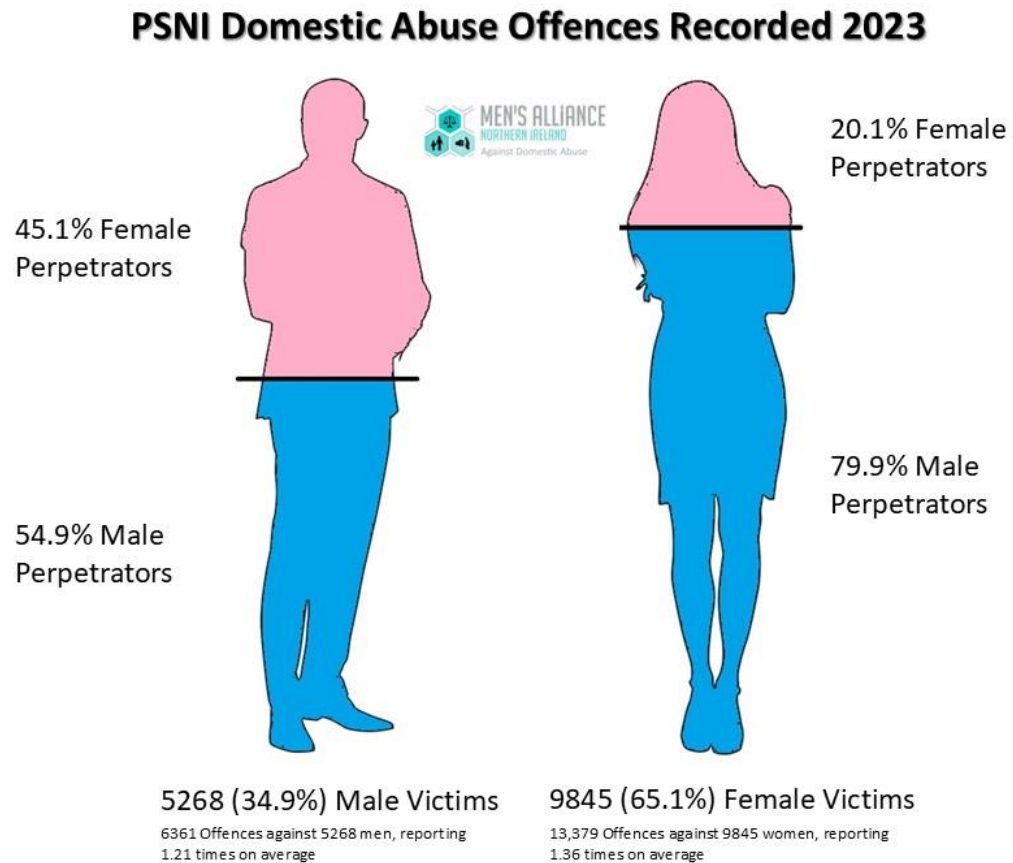
Total people is  $5,268 + 9,845 = 15,113$

Males as a % is  $6,268 / 15,113 = 34.9\%$

Females as a % is  $9,845 / 15,113 = 65.1\%$

#### IV. Conclusion

Men represent 35% of victims of domestic abuse in Northern Ireland.



#### e. 55% of abuse of men is by men, 45% by women

55% of abuse towards men is by other men, and 45% by women. We know over 50% of abuse of men is never reported from the 2024 Victims Commissioner Report, a lot because of shame and embarrassment that they have been abused by a women. Men seem to feel more comfortable reporting abuse by other men, because it does not mean they are weak. This plays out in our support groups, where it is estimated that 97%+ of the men we support are victims of women in Intimate Relationships, contrary to the rumour that men are predominantly abused by men in gay

relationships. Our MANi Support Groups give these men a safe place, where they can talk about their abuse in the knowledge that the other men there have had the same experience too.

Source PSNI FoI-2024-01300

## f. 80% of abuse of women is by men, 20% by women

80% of abuse of women is by men, and 20% by other women. This causes some concern for the men we support, as they feel that they are blamed for all abuse of women, that the 20% is not recognised and although they are victims of abuse themselves they are being blamed for Violence Against Women and Girls, and worse their own abuse ignored.

Source PSNI FoI-2024-01300

## g. 28% of perpetrators are Female, yet only 9% of convictions.

Why does the number of female perpetrators drop so dramatically, by 68%?

### I. Police Identified Perpetrators (PSNI)

From PSNI FOI 238 (2019–2024) and FOI 13404:

Across recent years, men constitute the clear majority of domestic abuse suspects, but women account for a substantial minority:

- Over 2019–2024, PSNI records show around 43,000 male suspects and 12,000 female suspects in domestic-abuse-flagged files, roughly 72% male, 28% female.
- FOI 13404, looking at perpetrators by relationship type, produces similar proportions.

- Key point for Ministers:  
Roughly one in five to one in four domestic abuse suspects recorded by PSNI is female.  
That matters when we compare this to what happens later in the system.

## II. Public Prosecution Service decisions (prosecute, divert, no-prosecute)

From PPS FOI 238 25-26 (Tables 2–5):

For male suspects (2019–2024):

- Total PPS decisions: 18,369.
- Prosecution (indictable + summary): 17,262.
- Diversion: 1,107.
- Diversion rate: about 6% of male suspects.

For female suspects (2019-2024):

- Total PPS decisions: 2,820.
- Prosecution (indictable + summary): 2,255.
- Diversion: 565.
- Diversion rate: about 20% of female suspects.

Therefore:

A female domestic-abuse suspect is over three times more likely than a male suspect to receive a diversionary disposal instead of prosecution (20% vs 6%).

This is before we even get to court outcomes. It strongly suggests systemic sex-based differences in how similar behaviour is disposed of, even once a case is on PPS's desk.

We are not in any way wanting to defend male perpetrators or advocate for reduced sentences, we DO want to advocate for the abuse of males by female perpetrators to be taken equally as seriously.

### III. Court convictions and sentencing by sex

From DoJ FOIs 25/112 and 25/116:

- Across the years since the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act came into force, around 91-92% of convictions under the Act have a male defendants.
- Only around 8-9% of convictions are of female defendants, despite women making up around 28% of police-recorded suspects.

Female defendants are under-represented by roughly a factor of two to three at conviction stage when compared to their share of PSNI suspects.

Combined with the diversion data above, this indicates that male suspects' cases are more likely to be prosecuted and to result in conviction, while female suspects are more likely to be diverted or to fall out of the system.

### IV. The 28% to 9% funnel for female defendants

PSNI data and DoJ FOIs together show a stark funnel for female perpetrators:

- At Police stage:
  - 28% of domestic-abuse suspects are female
- At PPS decision stage:
  - Females are over three times more likely than men to receive a diversionary disposal instead of prosecution (around 20% vs 6%).
- At Court conviction stage:
  - DoJ FOIs indicate only 8-9% of defendants convicted under the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act / DA aggravator are female.

## V. Conclusions:

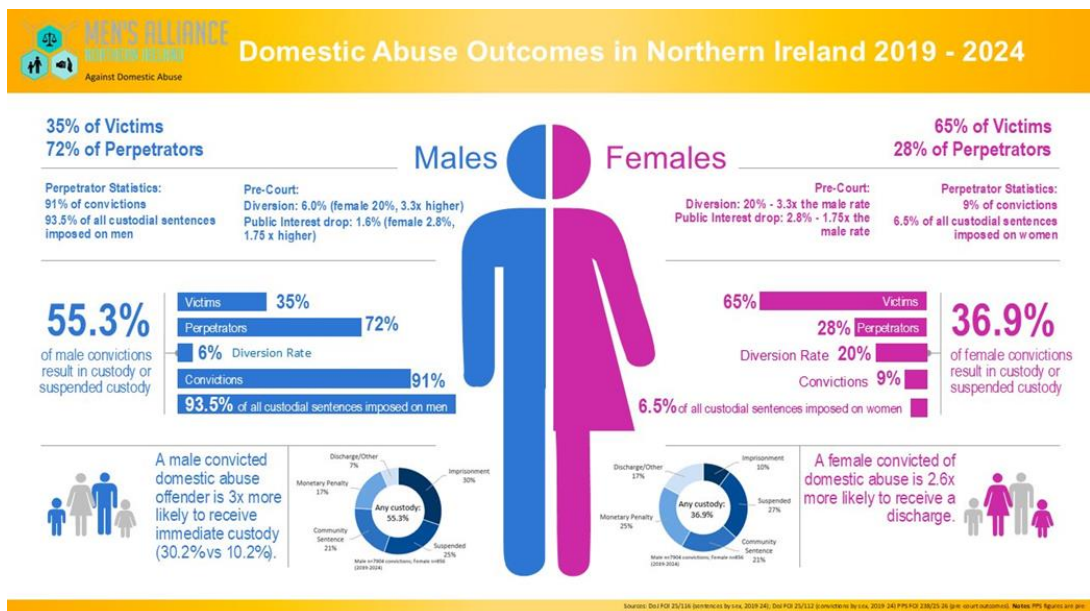
In the media recently there was outcry because male perpetrators represented 91% of total convictions, but no concern was mentioned that female perpetrators (Against men and women) fell from 28% to 9%.

Abusive females go from over a quarter of suspects at the police stage to less than one in ten convicted defendants at the court stage.

That does not necessarily mean that PPS or courts are “biased” in individual cases. But at system level, the pattern is difficult to explain purely by differences in behaviour.

We are not advocating for male perpetrator sentences to be reduced, we are advocating for female perpetrator convictions and sentencing to be increased, in recognising their abuse of men and other women equally with the abuse by men.

## VI. Infographic:



## h. 156 men reported over 1000 false allegations against them.

False allegations are a huge issue for men escaping abuse, and whilst some organisations claim false allegations are a myth and very rare, we know from our experience that they are not. They are at epidemic proportions.

Invariably, men who come to us have been falsely accused by an ex-partner of a crime. When asked why, there is always a reason: an upcoming child contact case, a new relationship, a new marriage or even a new child. 15 years after leaving a relationship, this can still carry on with allegations to the Police, Social Services or the Courts.

The core issue is that there are no consequences; a man can be falsely accused of assault, Domestic Abuse, Coercive Control or even rape. Child contact is suspended until the criminal case is sorted out, which could take up to 2 years. The case is heard in court, he is found innocent of the allegations, nothing is said to his accuser and he resumes efforts to see his children, then another allegation is made.

There is no deterrent, and his abuse continues with this generational learned behaviour of control, relentlessly.

The man facing the false allegations has his life destroyed, his mental health deteriorates, his self-esteem is lost, friends and even family may shun him and he stops socialising or may even stop leaving his house as he feels everyone is talking about him.

Men who have contact with their children feel they have to wear bodycams 24/7 while their children are with them, to help as evidence to defend any allegations.

This is how abuse of a male continues post relationship, using the system, and without consequence for the accuser. Ultimately, it may lead men to take their own lives.

We Polled our MANi support group to give us an idea of the scale of the issue, 156 men responded to the Poll, between them they reported in excess of 1000 false allegations.



False allegations are not a myth, they are an epidemic.

**We have concerns that false allegations on such a scale are skewing the PSNI records, inflating incidents of female abuse, and at the same time issues with PSNI Support of men reporting abuse is reducing statistics of male victimisation.**

## i. There is no Refuge for Men and their Children in NI

When a man, or a man and his children, leave an abusive relationship there is no Safe Space or Refuge in NI for them to go to. This being the case, many men do not leave their abuser; they may have been alienated from friends and family and have nowhere to go, and they stay as the situation deteriorates.

They may leave and ask the Housing Executive for assistance, but if they have no children it is most likely they will not be helped, or if they are they will find themselves in a homeless shelter, not a place for a man suffering from his mental health, and without the right care and support.

Many other men find themselves living in cars, work vans, tents or sofa surfing around friends, not a situation where those with children can maintain child contact. So begins the process of alienation.

Mens Alliance have a full Business Case for the first male refuge in Northern Ireland, and are working to see it a reality.

The proposal requires the support of Government Departments, but uniquely the Capital project should not require a financial commitment.

## j. 51% of male victims of abuse have never disclosed to anyone.

The Victims Commissioner Report of November 2024 Male Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence Study, reported that 51.2% of men who have experienced abuse had never disclosed to anyone.

See Page 11 and 49, Section 3.4 Experiences of Disclosure and page 68 Section 4.1.3 Disclosure & Aftermath - <https://www.cvocni.org/files/cvocni/2024-11/ME-IPV%20Report%20November%202024%20Website%20Version.pdf>

## k. 50% of male victims of abuse have to leave their job

In an indicative MANi Group Poll the members were asked:

“How many days work have you lost as a direct consequence of your abuser?”

54 men responded. 50% had lost their jobs, or had to leave.

There is a huge financial cost to the men involved, they may be coerced into having to take jobs at lesser income to pacify their abuser, or after escaping their abuser to enable child contact as she invariably will not agree to accommodate work hours, so to see his kids he has to look for alternative employment.



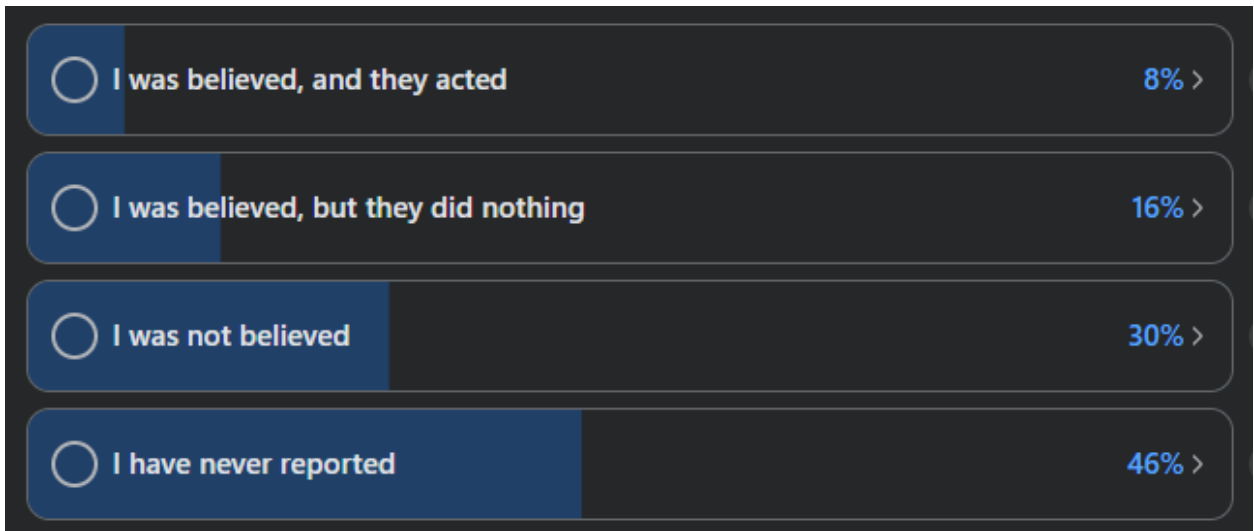
## l. 16% of men that report to the Police see them act

In an indicative MANi Group Poll the members were asked:

“I reported my Abuse to the Police and the outcome was....”

160 men responded. 46% had never reported their abuse to the Police, of the ones that had only 16% of them feel they were believed and they acted, worryingly 56% that reported were not believed.

This is a worrying number, especially when we are actively encouraging men to report their abuse. They need to be believed, or it will act as a further deterrent preventing them from reporting..... alternatively they may try to report once, and never go back.



### (3) England/Wales Specific Statistics

There is a lack of good research in Northern Ireland into males as victims of domestic abuse, which the Victims Commissioner has gone some way to correcting in the last couple of years with the 2025 Services Mapping Exercise and the 2024 Male Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence Study.

This being the case we would like to look at England/Wales statistics that could reasonably be transferred to NI society, or at the very least be indicative of what is going on in areas where we have no NI specific Research available.

## a. 51% of victims of abuse in current relationships are men.

In England and Wales, there is considerably more in-depth information available around numbers relating to domestic abuse, through the efforts of the National Statistics Office.

One interesting comparison is that in their March 25 Domestic Abuse Prevalence and Victim Characteristics Dataset shows that 51% of victims of abuse in current relations are men, which reduces to 37% when it is an ex partner. This raises many questions.

The most recent comparative study in NI is the 2018/19 Northern Ireland Safe Community Survey, published in May 2023. It does not give the same detail as the ONS report. - <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/publications/experience-domestic-abuse-findings-201819-northern-ireland-safe-community-survey>

It would be reasonable to expect that the NI statistics would be comparable to England and Wales for current and ex relationships, with 51% of domestic abuse victims in current relationships being men.

Source:

The source data is available from the ONS Website for England and Wales, March 25 Data set, table 3, lines 56 and 57 for Current Partner Abuse and lines 80 and 81 for Ex Partner Abuse

[https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/domesticabuseprevalenceandvictimcharacteristicsappendixtables?fbclid=IwY2xjawPRHmBleHRuA2FlbQlxMABicmlkETF3UkJSRnRIZ2w0OTRPNVZxc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHiYNEwEWjeNsBjUStnpDJ6WTkUyqQFjNlksqqz\\_FyKtGTzxM3RGEz3tQzUJu\\_aem\\_2E-RxBYXymHIFQazb3NNaw](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/domesticabuseprevalenceandvictimcharacteristicsappendixtables?fbclid=IwY2xjawPRHmBleHRuA2FlbQlxMABicmlkETF3UkJSRnRIZ2w0OTRPNVZxc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHiYNEwEWjeNsBjUStnpDJ6WTkUyqQFjNlksqqz_FyKtGTzxM3RGEz3tQzUJu_aem_2E-RxBYXymHIFQazb3NNaw)

## (4) Data gaps and Limitations

There are important caveats which need to be considered:

### a. No official Data “pipeline” for domestic abuse in NI

Unlike England & Wales, there is no ONS style integrated pipeline linking:

- Police recorded domestic abuse crimes
- PPS charging and diversion decisions
- Court outcomes.

All linkage here relies on separate FOI responses and bespoke spreadsheets.

This is fragile, labour intensive, and should not be necessary in 2025.

### b. Suicides linked to domestic abuse are not identified in NI

- NISRA suicide bulletins do not record whether domestic abuse was a contributing factor.
- Our estimate that approximately 58% of DA-related deaths are male therefore relies on applying external research to NI suicide figures, combined with PSNI domestic homicide data.
- This is a *conservative* estimate: if anything, it is likely to undercount hidden male suicides linked to their abuse, coercive control, false allegations and family court related stress.

## c. Under-recording and misclassification of male victims

- Existing PSNI and PPS FOIs show a tendency for incidents involving male victims to be recorded or disposed of more lightly (e.g. as “verbal arguments” or via diversion).
- This pattern closely matches with the lived experiences of the men we support.
- Under reporting, research has shown over 50% of men will never report their abuse, and for the men that do 84% are not believed and supported by the PSNI, and go undocumented?
- False allegations against men are a huge issue, and zero consequences do not deter them. These allegations would inflate figures of male perpetrated abuse against females, and when proven to be false they are not removed from the overall statistic records. Mens Alliance experience has shown individual men facing DOZENS of false allegations, branding him as the perpetrator and his accuser as the victim. This means all official stats are likely to under-state male victimisation and over-state male perpetration due to false allegations.

## d. Domestic abuse aggravator not applied consistently

- There is evidence from FOI’s and Department of Justice that the domestic abuse aggravator is not always applied where the perpetrator has parental responsibility or where the abuse is framed as “child protection” or “contact dispute”.
- This again risks masking domestic abuse in family settings, particularly where fathers are victims.

These limitations are not a reason to ignore the data; rather, they strengthen the case for an official ONS style pipeline and for better recording of abuse against men.

## e. Historical under representation of gay and bisexual men

- The 1998 *Relationships in Northern Ireland* study commissioned by OFMDFM relied on self-selected volunteers at a time when social attitudes to gay and bisexual men in Northern Ireland were significantly more hostile than today.
- Only a small number of men in same-sex relationships participated. In practice, gay and bisexual men faced all of the stigma and shame described by heterosexual male victims, plus fear of homophobia and being outed.
- The true scale of domestic abuse against men and particularly against men in same-sex relationships is therefore likely to have been higher than the 1998 study could capture.

## (5) System Design, Training and Data Transparency

### PSNI and justice training on DA / coercive control

FOI responses and available documents indicate that:

- PSNI's training on domestic abuse and coercive control has drawn heavily on third-sector providers, including Women's Aid and similar organisations.
- These programmes, while valuable in many respects, are typically framed through a gendered lens:
  - male perpetrator / female victim as the default scenario
  - little to no content on male victims, female perpetrators, or abuse in same-sex relationships.

Consequences:

Officers and practitioners can leave training with the implicit message that “domestic abuse = he hits her”, which:

- makes them less likely to recognise male victims
- more likely to interpret mutual or ambiguous situations as male-perpetrated

Given the data presented in this report, that framing is out of date.

## Data architecture and FOI refusals

FOI 16047 and similar responses show that:

- PSNI cannot, within FOI cost limits, easily provide:
  - repeat-victim analysis for domestic abuse by sex
  - breakdowns of non-crime domestic incidents (e.g. verbal threats, coercive behaviour) by sex
  - details on vulnerability flags (mental health, disability, substance misuse) by sex.
- PPS and courts likewise do not routinely publish domestic-abuse outcome data by sex of victim and defendant.
- DoJ has indicated in FOI 25/116 that the current Causeway / NICTS systems do not hold victim sex data in a form that can be used for routine equality monitoring. This is not because the concepts are complex; it is because systems were not built with equality monitoring in mind.

## Consequences for equality and accountability

The result is that Ministers, MLAs and the public cannot see the full picture:

- where male vs female victims drop out of the system

- whether diversionary disposals are used differently by sex
- how sentencing outcomes compare.

Without that visibility, it is easy for:

- genuine inequalities in treatment to persist unchallenged
- advocacy narratives, rather than data, to dominate policy

This is particularly problematic in a devolved context where Northern Ireland has its own justice system but relies heavily on GB-based research and campaigning narratives that may not match the local data.

## (6) Abuse & Male Victims over Time

Using the PSNI crime series (*Domestic Abuse Incidents & Crime*):

From 2004/05 to 2024/25:

- Domestic abuse incidents recorded by PSNI rose from around 21,000 to roughly 30,000 per year, an increase of about 40%.
- Domestic abuse crimes almost doubled, from around 9,600 to around 18,400 per year.

In 2004/05:

- 25% of Domestic Abuse crime victims were male. (2103)
- 74% of Domestic Abuse crime victims were female. (6301) (Remainder unknown)

By 2024/25:

- 33% of Domestic Abuse crime victims were male. (5747)
- 67% of Domestic Abuse crime victims were female. (11894)

So over 20 years:

- The male share of domestic abuse victims has risen by around 7-8 percentage points. (+273%)

- The female share has fallen by a similar amount, even as the absolute number of female victims has remained very high. (+188%)

This means:

Domestic abuse in NI is still majority female-victim, but **reported** male victimisation has grown steadily and now represents roughly one-third of all recorded victims.

Source:

PSNI crime series (*Domestic Abuse Incidents & Crime*) -

<https://www.psni.police.uk/about-us/our-publications-and-reports/official-statistics/domestic-abuse-statistics>

## (7) Access to Support and Services

### a. Victim Support / referral data by sex

From FOI 25-113 and related returns:

- Male victims are consistently under-represented in referrals to Victim Support and other services compared to their share of police-recorded victims.

For example:

- Men might be 32% of domestic-abuse crime victims, but only 15–20% of referrals to certain support services.
- Women, conversely, may receive disproportionately more referrals relative to their share of victims.

This suggests:

- Front-line agencies are less likely to recognise men as victims worth referring; and/or

- Men are less likely to accept referrals because services are presented and branded for women.

## b. Commissioned services and gaps for men

Looking across current commissioning (as far as information is publicly available):

- The majority of funded domestic-abuse services in NI are explicitly framed within a VAWG model:

- Women's Aid refuges and outreach.
- Helplines and advocacy focused on women and children.

- Very few services are:

- explicitly open to men
- designed around men's practical needs (out-of-hours support, father-friendly environments, help with legal processes and housing).

### Male victims therefore face a double bind:

- I. They are less likely to be recognised and referred.
- II. When they are referred, they often find no suitable service available, reinforcing their belief that “there is nothing for men”.
- III. There is currently no refuge that men fleeing domestic abuse can go to with their children, nor any indication that the assembly intends to correct this.

## c. Barriers to help-seeking for male victims

The 1998 OFMDFM study, the 2024 male-victim mapping, and contemporary research all highlight similar barriers:

- Shame and stigma; fear of not being believed, or of being seen as weak or “less of a man”.

- Assumption of perpetrator status; men expect, often correctly, that if police attend a domestic incident they will be treated as the suspect, not the victim.
- Fear of losing their children; especially in a system where allegations can directly affect contact and residence arrangements.
- Lack of visible services; most publicity and outreach for domestic abuse shows women and children; men rarely see themselves in the material.
- Internalisation of gender norms; many men minimise their own victimisation (“she only hit me once”, “it’s just shouting”).

A credible strategy for domestic abuse can’t change social norms overnight, but it must at least stop reinforcing them. At present, Northern Ireland’s service landscape still does.

## (8) Under-16 / parental-responsibility carve-out

A further structural issue is how the law and recording practices draw the line at age 16:

- The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act applies where the victim is 16 or over.
- Abuse of a child under 16 by a parent or person with parental responsibility is usually dealt with under child protection and general criminal offences, not as “domestic abuse”.

In practice, this means:

- A mother who repeatedly assaults or coercively controls her partner will typically be recorded as a domestic-abuse perpetrator.

- The same mother who assaults or terrorises her child may be recorded under child cruelty/common assault/neglect but not counted in domestic-abuse statistics.

Because women are more often the resident parent and primary carer, this carve-out risks:

- Under-counting maternal domestic abuse within the home
- Masking abuse of fathers via children, where coercive control is exerted through contact, false allegations or alienation, but recorded administratively under “safeguarding”.

This is not about diminishing violence against children, far from it. It is about:

Recognising that the same pattern of controlling, coercive behaviour in the home is treated very differently depending on who the abuser is, who the victim is, and whether parental responsibility is involved.

Any serious equality analysis needs joined-up data across domestic abuse, child protection, and public-law/private-law family proceedings. At present, that does not exist.

## (9) 1998 vs 2024: A 26-Year Failure for Male Victims

### a. Key findings from 1998 OFMDFM report

The 1998 research found that:

- A significant minority of domestic-abuse victims were male, including both heterosexual and gay men
- Many men described serious physical violence and coercive control, including being:
  - hit, kicked, stabbed and sexually assaulted

- ⦿ threatened with false allegations or loss of contact with children.
- ⦿ Men faced intense shame, disbelief and stereotyping when seeking help
- ⦿ Services were designed for women, with little or no male-specific provision

It recommended:

- ⦿ public campaigns acknowledging male victims
- ⦿ inclusive service design and commissioning
- ⦿ improved data collection on male victims
- ⦿ training for police and professionals to recognise abuse against men

## b. Key findings from 2024 male-victim mapping

The 2024 Intimate Partner Research, under the current Victims Commissioner, found that:

- ⦿ Men and boys still account for around one-third of domestic-abuse victims
- ⦿ The same barriers, shame, fear, lack of services, are still present
- ⦿ Many of the 1998 recommendations remain unimplemented
- ⦿ The recommendations remained the same, plus:
  - ⦿ Creation of a Task Force
  - ⦿ Educational materials to the public
  - ⦿ Further Research

### c. Side-by-side comparison of recommendations

Table: 1998 vs 2024 - The Same Recommendations, 26 Years Apart:

Abuse of Adult Males in Intimate Partner Relationships in Northern Ireland (1998)	Male Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence, ME IPV Study (2024)
<b>Public awareness and stigma</b>	
“That public information programmes be developed to enable victims of such violence to reveal the harm they have suffered without fear of humiliating consequences.” p.72	“Public awareness campaigns with a goal of reducing stigma and polarisation, as well as challenging stereotypical thinking about IPV.” p.13
“All programmes of domestic violence with regard to public education should recognise the complex nature of the subject and include a component sensitising bodies and personnel to evidence of female violence against males.” p.73	“The continued support of the NI government for IPV awareness and stigma reduction campaigns, especially those which are gender age minority inclusive.” p.13
	“Educational materials for the general public featuring a broad spectrum of materials available online or in print, with an aim towards awareness and stigma reduction.” p.13
<b>Service provision and support</b>	
“That listening and referral programmes be established to deal with the often severe effects of domestic violence on males, including counselling, advocacy and information.” p.72	“Charities support organisations should explore expanding their remit for additional types of support, particularly legal support advice.” p.13
“That a drop in centre be established to deal with the totality of male victim needs from advice on health to legal information on rights.” p.72 to 73	
“That services dealing with physical injuries to male domestic victims be more sensitised to the emotional effects and need for referral.” p.72	“GPs healthcare professionals should be trained to identify indicators of IPV and respond appropriately to disclosure, including signposting support.” p.13
	“Charities support organisations should signpost clear eligibility requirements for service users.” p.13
<b>Multi agency coordination</b>	
“There must be a commitment to raise consciousness over the effects of male victimisation amongst agency personnel through education and training.” p.72	“All charities support organisations should consider forming a task force or executive advisory group to foster collaboration and a united front against abuse.” p.13

Abuse of Adult Males in Intimate Partner Relationships in Northern Ireland (1998)	Male Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence, ME IPV Study (2024)
	“Creation of a task force or expert advisory group at NI governmental level for all matters involving IPV would be invaluable.” p.13
<b>Police and justice system</b>	
“That procedures for policing and other investigative personnel should be constructed to accept that the male is not necessarily the offender but sometimes the victim.” p.73	“Police officers should be trained to understand multiple types of IPV, believe victims regardless of gender, and react appropriately to disclosure.” p.13
“That police procedures be structured to avoid the possibility that male guilt is presumed in incidents of reported domestic violence.” p.73	
“Respondents were particularly concerned about their experience with the legal process and consequences in relation to their accommodation and employment.” p.4	“Studies should focus on institutional abuse and its impact, including legal systems and quality of life outcomes.” p.12
<b>Social services and child related systems</b>	
“That training packs be prepared for social workers to recognise and deal with accounts of male victimisation.” p.73	“Social services workers should be trained to understand that fathers can be victims and to challenge harmful stereotypes.” p.13
<b>Health services</b>	
“That GPs and similar personnel be supplied with a list of contacts for referral agencies when male victimisation is reported.” p.73	“GPs healthcare professionals should be trained on identifying IPV and appropriate responses to disclosure.” p.13
<b>Data and research</b>	
“Consideration be given to establishing the extent and context of male victimisation.” p.72	“Future research should prioritise specific sub populations including boys, older men, LGBTQ individuals and minority groups.” p.12
	“Future studies should examine psychological mechanisms, cumulative abuse, coercive control and mental health outcomes.” p.12
	“Comparative synthesis research with other countries should be undertaken.” p.12
<b>Legal aid and public understanding of law</b>	
	“The Department of Justice should consider partnering with third sector organisations to release civil legal aid consultation results in educational lay language formats.” p.13
<b>Accommodation Provision</b>	
Provision of a male only safe space equivalent to refuge accommodation “That a ‘drop in’ centre be established to deal with the totality of male victim needs, from advice on health to legal information on rights.” Context within the report links abuse to loss of accommodation and exclusion from existing female focused refuge provision. The term Refuge was not used in association with males at the time. Page 72 to 73	Identification of absence of male refuge provision and need for safe exit from abuse “At present, there is no domestic abuse refuge in NI for male use.” Practice recommendations call for expansion of support provision in response to men being unable to leave abusive environments safely. Pages 16 to 17 and Practice Recommendations page 13

## d. Key Overlapping Recommendations

Both the 1998 and 2024 reports call for:

- Better data on male victims
- Gender-inclusive services, including safe accommodation and specialist support
- Training and guidance for police, courts and social services on male victimisation
- Public messaging that recognises men and boys as potential victims

The repeated message is clear: The problems have been known for over a quarter of a century. The gap is not evidence; it is implementation and political will.

The Uncomfortable Truth: Twenty-six years separate these two sets of recommendations. In that time:

For women and girls services have developed as needed:

- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategies have been developed, funded, and embedded across Northern Ireland
- Specialist services for women have expanded significantly
- Legislative reform has occurred with the Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021
- Public awareness campaigns have consistently focused on women and girls as victims

Yet for male victims, their need has been neglected:

- No dedicated refuge provision exists
- No male-specific helpline has been established

- Training materials still default to male perpetrator/female victim scenarios
- Data systems still cannot easily provide sex-disaggregated analysis
- Public messaging still overwhelmingly portrays domestic abuse as violence against women

The 1998 report was commissioned by the centre of government (OFMDFM) and then effectively buried. The 2024 report was produced by an independent statutory officeholder and risks the same fate unless Ministers act.

## e. Why little may have changed

Reasons include:

- Institutional inertia: strategies built around VAWG have become established; shifting them feels politically risky
- Advocacy asymmetry: well-funded and established organisations speak for women and children; there is no equivalent institutional voice for male victims
- Narrative capture: domestic abuse has been framed so consistently as a women’s issue that acknowledging male victims can be misrepresented as “undermining women”
- Lack of data visibility: without an official pipeline, it has been easy to downplay male victimisation and female offending

The result can only be described as a 26-year equality failure in which male victims have been acknowledged on paper but left largely unsupported in practice.

## (10) Conclusions

Summarising the analysis:

- Domestic abuse in Northern Ireland is not gender-neutral, but neither is it a simple one-way story of male perpetrators and female victims
- Men now represent around one-third of recorded domestic-abuse victims, and that share is increasing
- Women represent around a quarter of suspects at police stage but only one in ten convicted defendants, indicating a marked difference in how cases progress through PPS and courts
- When DA-linked suicides are accounted for, more men than women die in the context of domestic abuse
- The Executive has had clear evidence of male victimisation since 1998. The 2024 work by the Victims' Commissioner confirms that very little has changed.

Current strategies and services are not aligned with the evidence. Male victims and their children are not just overlooked, they are consistently disadvantaged by the way domestic abuse is framed, recorded and resourced.

## (11) Recommendations to the Executive Office and NI Executive

### a. Commission an ONS-style domestic-abuse data pipeline for NI

- Link PSNI, PPS and court data at person-level, with annual publication by sex of victim and defendant, outcome type and sentence.

### b. Require NISRA to identify and report domestic abuse related suicides

- Add DA-link fields to coronial and registration data
- Treat domestic abuse as a core strand in suicide prevention

### c. Implement and update the 1998 and 2024 recommendations on male victims

- Publish a joint action plan with timelines and responsible departments
- Include: male-inclusive helplines, safe accommodation, legal and mental-health support

### d. Reform training and guidance across the justice system

- Ensure all DA and coercive-control training include:
  - male victims
  - female perpetrators
  - abuse in same-sex relationships
  - parental-responsibility contexts
- Publish core training materials for transparency.

### e. Review use of diversion and sentencing in DA cases by sex

- Audit PPS and court decisions to understand the 28% to 9% funnel for female defendants
- Ensure diversion and conditional discharges are applied equitably, recognising the abuse of men and women equally.

### f. Align strategies with the evidence

- Ensure future domestic abuse / VAWG strategies explicitly recognise male victims and set measurable outcomes for them
- Require equality-impact assessments that take account of the data in this report

g. Investigate the prevalence of false allegations relating to family courts and domestic abuse

The one issue we hear time and again is false allegations, if they are addressed costly legal process will reduce, cases will reduce and the Courts System will speed up.

There will be less victimisation of men, and more children with fathers consistently in their lives.

h. Establish a standing advisory group on male victims of domestic abuse

To provide ongoing input to policy, monitoring and strategy implementation, advisors to include Organisations in the Male DA Sector.