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Community Rehabilitation Company



Domestic abuse during Coronavirus

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misuse

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**Coronavirus and Crime:
Fact File 1**

Stacey Musimbe-Rix
KSS CRC Research and Policy Unit
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A global picture: the impact of coronavirus on domestic abuse



Italy

In Italy, they are classing the domestic abuse problem as 'an emergency in an emergency'. The Women Against Violence Network reports a 74.5% increase in calls from March 2 to April 5. Of the cases reported, 28% were making their first call for help.



France

France has seen a rise of 36% in domestic abuse cases.



South Africa

South Africa received 87,000 reports of gender-based violence during the first week of the lockdown.



Lebanon

Lebanon reported that domestic abuse figures have doubled since the lock down.



China

China reported that domestic abuse figures have tripled.



Israel

Israel has reported a 6 percent increase in domestic violence cases more generally in March of this year compared to the previous year.



Australia

Australia has seen a 75% increase in searches for domestic abuse support.



Brazil

Brazil reported a 40-50% increase in domestic abuse cases since the outbreak of the virus.



USA

In the USA, 18 police departments reported a spike in domestic abuse cases.



Malaysia

Malaysia has reported that domestic abuse figures have doubled.

A national picture



West Midlands

West Midlands Police have arrested around 400 domestic abuse suspects in the last two weeks. They have also recorded a daily average of 119 domestic abuse crimes since the government's lockdown order was put in force on March 23.



Avon and Somerset

Avon and Somerset police reported a 20.9% increase in domestic abuse incidents in the last two weeks, from 718 to 868.



Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester police are anticipating a surge in domestic abuse cases.

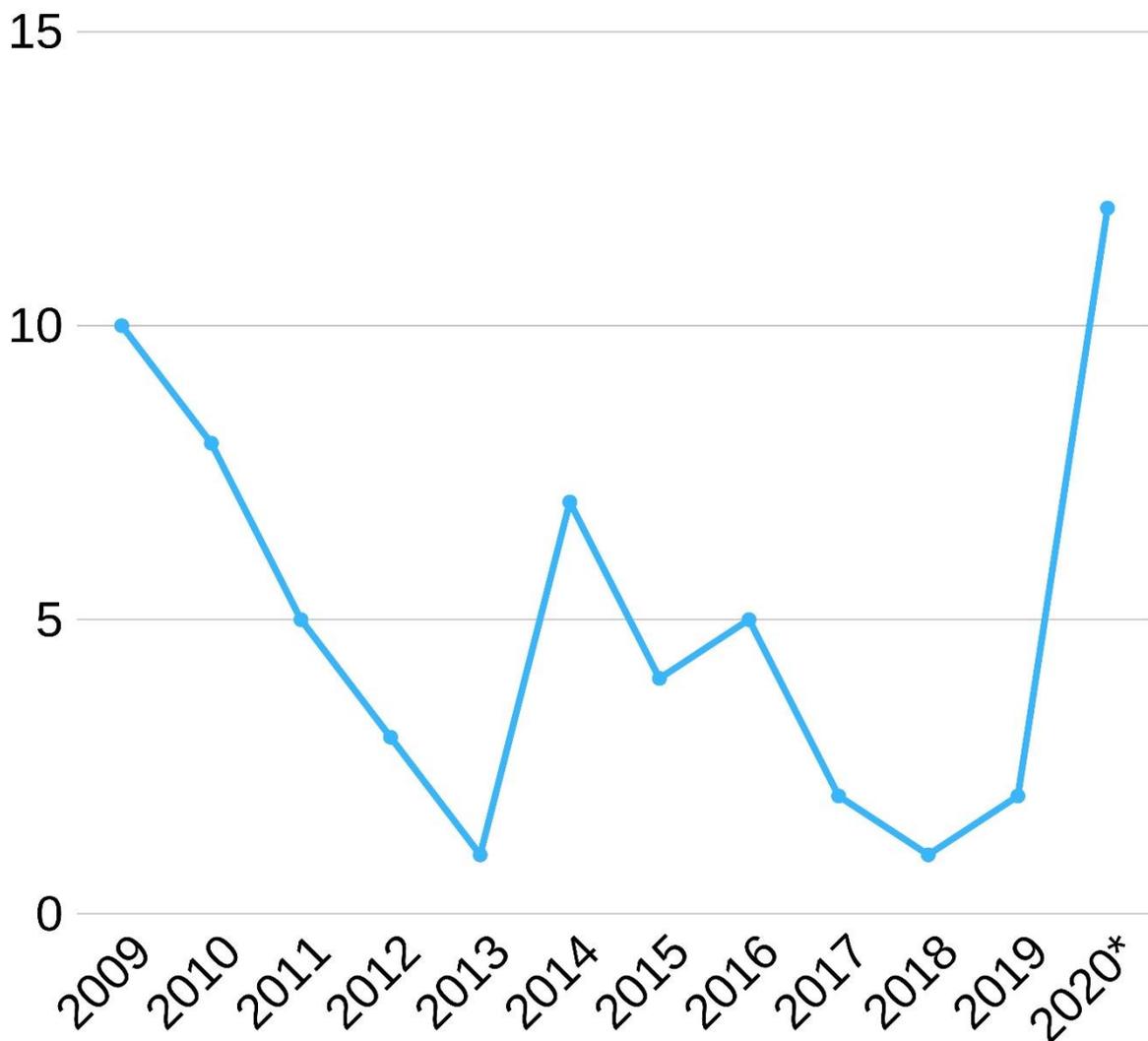


Scotland

Contrastingly, calls to helplines in Scotland have decreased by 20% since the lockdown and the reasons behind this are not yet understood.

Domestic homicide figures UK

The graph below illustrates female domestic homicide figures during the period 23 March-12 April over an 11-year period.



Source: Ingala Smith (2020) Counting Dead Women

*the figure for 2020 would be 14 if we included two female children killed by their father

UK trend for search term 'What is domestic abuse?'

The graph below illustrates the trend in the UK for the search term, 'what is domestic abuse?' over a year period from April 2019-April 2020.

Source: Google Trends (2020)



UK trend for search term 'Domestic violence shelter'

This graph illustrates the trend for the search term, 'domestic violence shelter', over a year period from April 2019-April 2020 in the UK.

Source: Google Trends (2020)



According to Sky News (2020), searches for "what is domestic abuse?" rose by 46% from February to March, and there was a 64% rise in searches for the phrases "domestic violence shelter" and "domestic abuse shelter".

In brief



The Office for National Statistics estimates that 2.4 million people annually are abused by a partner or ex-partner (Office for National Statistics, 2019:2). They also reported that in the year ending 2019, 80 women had been killed by a partner or intimate partner which equates to 6.6 women a month (Office for National Statistics, 2020:810).



Ingala Smith (2020) reported that, in the 9 days preceding the Coronavirus lock down announcement, there were 8 domestic homicides recorded in the UK and this is in comparison to 8 homicides recorded in the previous month. The figures are hard hitting as the total number of homicides recorded in these 9 days equated to the same number of domestic homicides in the month of February (Ingala Smith 2020). As the graph shows- there is a constant fluctuation in domestic abuse cases over the years but, the figures do show that the figures during the lockdown are at their highest in 11 years. The increased numbers are consistent with figures reported in other countries such as France, which reported a 36% increase in domestic abuse cases in Paris and a 32% increase throughout the rest of France (Al Jazeera, 2020). There are suggestions that the figures, as high as they are, are still an under representation of the problem (Bristol Cable, 2020).



Research suggests a rise in online searches relating to domestic violence during the lockdown (Sky News, 2020). Google trends also shows a spike in searches for domestic abuse support, on the day that the lock down was announced. The National Domestic Abuse Helpline has reported a 25% increase in domestic abuse calls since the lockdown and a 150% increase in visits to their online chat room (BBC, 2020). It has also reported that, on Monday 6 April, the calls to the helpline soared by 120 per cent and visits to the website rose by 700 % compared to the previous day (Independent, 2020)



For victims of domestic abuse, home is not always a safe place and some victims have reported that their perpetrator has used CO-VID 19 lock-down rules to further control and isolate them (The Times, 2020). Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable currently as evidence suggests that domestic abuse risk escalates in pregnancy (Refuge, 2020). With many face to face maternity visits on hold, the risk could be hidden from services. (Al Jazeera, 2020). There are suggestions that the figures, as high as they are, are still an under representation of the problem (Bristol Cable, 2020).



According to Bristol Cable (2020) 'studies show that abusers are more likely to murder their partners in the wake of personal crises, and when families are together for a long time without the usual outlets like going to work. Lockdown is a mixture of the two.' The idea, however, that coronavirus breeds violent men sits uncomfortably with many domestic violence theorists. As Ingala Smith (2020) reports, 'coronavirus doesn't make a killer out of a man who has never been controlling, abusive and/or violent to the woman he is in a relationship with.'



There are multiple possible explanations suggested for the increase and one of those is that domestic abuse can be situational i.e. common couple violence and as a result, pressures from the lock down can act as a trigger or catalyst for violence in the home (Johnson, 2006). Marianne Hester outlined that domestic abuse figures rise when families spend more time together during occasions such as Christmas (Times, 2020). Stark (2007) argues that domestic abuse is rooted in power and control and going on this theory, increased domestic abuse figures could be attributed to higher levels of control exerted by the perpetrators to compensate for the loss of control over the coronavirus situation. Victims are also at their most vulnerable due to the lock down rules that confine them with the perpetrator, with limited means of escape.

The lock down rules mean that victims are physically isolated from informal and formal sources of support such as family; friends; social workers; doctors; midwives; health visitors and domestic abuse charities. Although the UK government has advised that the victims can still flee during the pandemic, victims and their children are more vulnerable as they have a limited means of escape due to the perpetrator's constant presence (Independent, 2020). Ordinarily, police have powers to exclude the perpetrator from the home but the lock down rules restrict the enforcement of such powers.



Evidence from Israel also suggests that a spike in DA cases was due to the closure of probation services which resulted in unmanaged risk towards victims and their families (Haaretz, 2020). In the UK, KSS CRC continues to prioritise face to face appointments for domestic abuse perpetrators.

Responding to domestic abuse during coronavirus

During this unprecedented situation, there have been different national and regional policies. On a national level, the government has published guidance on dealing with domestic abuse during this time and, this can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse>

The government initially announced that extra funding would be provided for vulnerable victims but after many campaigns, the government has now pledged an extra £2 million specifically for victims of domestic abuse during the coronavirus lockdown (Guardian, 2020). This follows the example of countries such as France which promised 1.1 million euros and 20 000 hotel nights for domestic abuse victims. In addition to the funding, the government started a campaign 'at home shouldn't meant at risk' to bring visibility to the increasingly vulnerable victims of domestic abuse.

The National Domestic Violence(NCDV) helpline remains open 24hours and, those that are unable to speak freely can use the website <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/Contact-us> or Women's aid online chat: <https://chat.womensaid.org.uk/>

Many refuges continue to accept women and refuge searches can be made through the NCDV. Organisations such as Galop for LGBTQ victims and Men's advice line for male victims, remain open.

Respect phone line remains open for perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Emergency services continue to safeguard people and there is information attached on how victims can make silent calls to the police (Independent Office for Police Complaints, 2019).

It is important that those supporting victims and perpetrators remain pragmatic and find ways to risk assess during the pandemic. Some women have reportedly been visiting local pharmacies and using code words to ask for help(CNN,2020).

Police in Cumbria have asked postal workers and delivery drivers to look out for signs of abuse.



- 1 Dial 999
- 2 Listen to the questions from the 999 operator
- 3 Respond by coughing or tapping the handset if you can
- 4 If prompted, press **55**
This lets the 999 call operator know it's a genuine emergency and you'll be put through to the police

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