



Northern Ireland
Women's European Platform

Call for submissions by the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women on femicide watch data

November 2020

Introduction

This submission focuses on Northern Ireland, as a devolved administration in the United Kingdom with devolved responsibility for crime recording and crime statistics. It aims to highlight the lack of data on femicide collected in Northern Ireland, which appears to be a direct result of lack of policy priority given to the issue. This call by the Special Rapporteur is very timely, and will provide important added value to advocacy by local domestic violence organisations and civil society calling for strengthened data gathering and for protection of women and girls to be made a greater policy priority across the region.

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation process. NIWEP is a membership organisation of women's NGOs in Northern Ireland. Established as the Northern Ireland coordination to the European Women's Lobby, the EU's expert body on women's rights and gender equality, NIWEP also has special consultative status with the UN. A key role for NIWEP is ensuring women and girls are engaged in policy and decision making, as well as promoting gender responsive policy and decision making at local, regional and national level taking account of the state's international obligations. NIWEP membership includes women's organisations across Northern Ireland, including organisations focused on supporting victims and survivors of domestic violence, and NIWEP has sought advice from members in developing this submission.

NIWEP's core objectives involve raising awareness and promoting implementation of key international human rights treaties and initiatives, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). NIWEP views implementing the recommendations of CEDAW as a clear roadmap and mechanism to ensuring women's human rights are fully met and upheld in Northern Ireland and beyond. The comments in this response are made within this context.

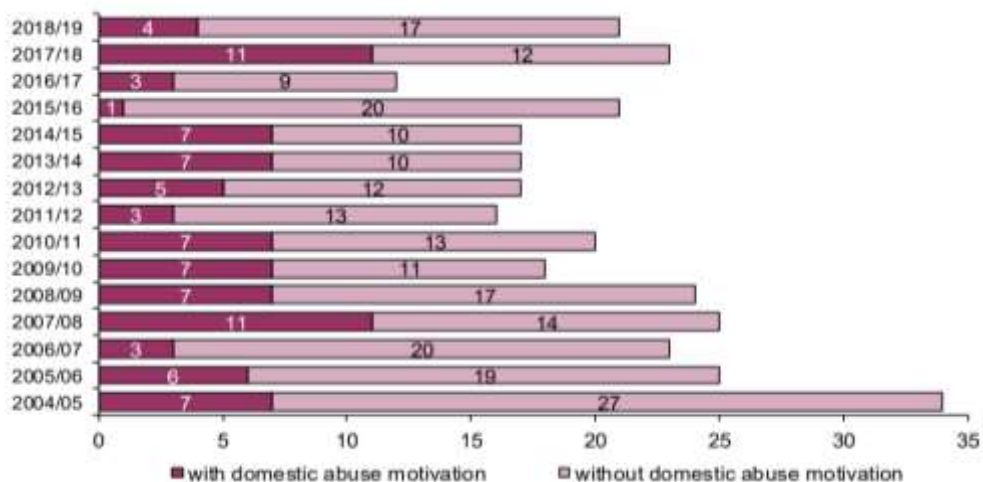
Overview – improved data urgently needed

A brief review of currently available data shows that almost no data on femicide is available for Northern Ireland. The only published data relates to murders by domestic motivation, as

recorded by the Police Service of Northern Ireland and outlined in figures 1-3 below. The figures show that the majority of victims are women, and that the perpetrator in over half of cases is a partner or ex partner. However, data on the gender of the perpetrator is not published, and therefore this evidence is not available to inform policy and operational planning to protect women and girls.

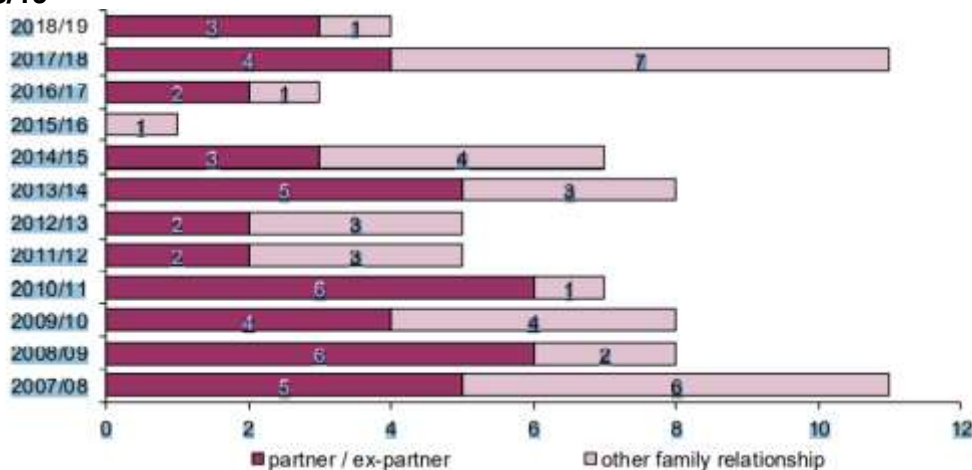
There is currently no femicide observatory in Northern Ireland and no routine review of cases is undertaken. Figures are collated UK wide, but this is on an ad hoc basis and relies on work by civil society.

Figure 1. Murders with a domestic abuse motivation



Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland (2019) [Trends in Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2018/19: Annual bulletin](#), figure 2.3

Figure 2. Domestic abuse homicides^{1,2} and victim relationship to offender, 2007/08 to 2018/19

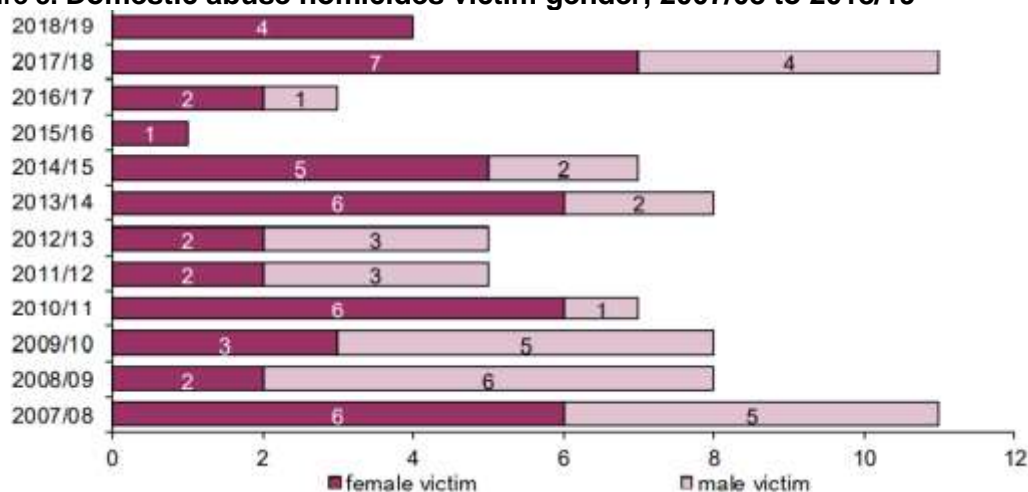


¹ There were 3 female victims of homicide involving partner/ex-partner which were established as murder during 2013/14 but where the deaths occurred in previous years.

² There was 1 female victim of homicide involving partner/ex-partner which were established as murder during 2014/15 but where the death occurred in a previous year.

Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland (2019) [Trends in Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2018/19: Annual bulletin](#), figure 3.6

Figure 3. Domestic abuse homicides victim gender, 2007/08 to 2018/19



Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland (2019) [Trends in Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 2004/05 to 2018/19: Annual bulletin](#), figure 3.7

Homicides during lockdown

No official data are as yet available relating to 2020. However, media reports confirm that there have been four homicides with a domestic motivation since lockdown began. All four victims were women and all were murdered by a male partner or family member¹. Three of the women were murdered in March and April, during lockdown, and the fourth in August². In total, 26 homicides have been recorded in the period since October 2019.³

¹ BBCNI (2020) 'Coronavirus: Three Domestic Killings Since Lockdown Began'

<<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-52440662> >

See also <https://www.psnl.police.uk/news/Latest-News/020420-man-charged-with-murder-of-82-year-old-woman-in-larne/> , <https://www.thejournal.ie/woman-39-dies-in-belfast-5082154-Apr2020/> , <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-52137716>

² PSNI news service (17 August 2020). [Murder investigation launched](#). Last accessed 12.11.20

³ PSNI (October 2020) [Monthly update, period ending 30 September 2020](#). Last accessed 12.11.20

Appendix 1. Trends in domestic violence in Northern Ireland

Domestic Violence in Northern Ireland: Trends

- Domestic violence is a violation of Article 5 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights – that “*no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*”.
- The *Stopping Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy* estimates the cost of domestic and sexual violence in Northern Ireland to be **£931 million**.
- UNICEF research released in 2006, showing per capita incidence, indicates that there are up to **32,000 children** and young people living with domestic violence in Northern Ireland.
- **69%** of all domestic abuse crimes were female and 31% were male. Of all offenders dealt with by police in 2018/19 in connection with domestic abuse crimes that resulted in an outcome, 86% were male and 12% were female. ⁴
- Victims of domestic abuse

Crime Statistics 2018-19

- Domestic Violence is a crime. Domestic abuse crimes (**31,682**) accounted for **16% of all crime** reported to the PSNI.
- There were two and a half times as many domestic abuse crimes as drug offences (**16,182** as opposed to **5,577**), and twice as many domestic abuse crimes as shoplifting offences (**6,773**).
- Police responded to a domestic incident **every 17 minutes** of every day of the year.
- Between 2018 – 2019, there were **4 murders** with a domestic abuse motivation in Northern Ireland and all victims were female. In 2017 Northern Ireland there was the joint highest level of femicide in Europe per 100,000 people.

⁴Findings from the PSNI Trends in Domestic Abuse Incidents and Crimes Recorded by the Police in Northern Ireland 31 March 2019 N.B. “Adult” defined as aged 18 and over