



Rosa, the UK Fund for Women and Girls, was set up to support initiatives that benefit women and girls in the UK. While many women and girls do enjoy freedom of choice and the opportunity for success in their lives, that's simply not true of all. This paper is one of four, which each look at where we are on a key issue: economic justice, safety, leadership & participation and health & wellbeing. Each paper describes the issues that need tackling, where we want to be, and how we'll know we're there.

Without a strong, vibrant women's sector, and the money to underpin action, we can't hope to bring about women's equality. Rosa's aims are to achieve social justice and equality for all women in the UK.

Safety

Where are we now?

Violence against women, which includes domestic violence (DV), stalking and harassment, rape and sexual offences, forced marriage, honour based violence and female genital mutilation, child abuse, sexual exploitation by human trafficking and prostitution, is a shameful violation of women's human rights and a cause and consequence of women's inequality. Globally, an estimated 150 million girls under the age of 18 suffered some form of sexual violence in 2002 alone. The first sexual experience of some 30% of women was forced, increasing to 45% among those who were under 15 at the time.¹

Specific forms of violence, such as acid attacks and dowry-related abuse, are more prevalent in some areas than others.

Fear of violence reduces women's autonomy in the home and their choices outside: in the labour market, and in the public and political spheres. We want to end violence and the fear of violence; this means better prevention, protection, and justice.²

Incidence rates

- 44% of women in Britain have suffered some form of violence since the age of 15.³ The proportion of women affected is far above the European average of 33%. Only 22% of British women contacted the police, similar to the European average
- 68% of women have suffered sexual harassment, compared to the EU average of 55%
- 64% of women avoid places or situations for fear of being physically or sexually assaulted - a higher proportion than the EU average of just over half

Domestic abuse makes up 8% of all recorded crime; 33% of all recorded 'assault with injury' crime; 49% of all recorded harassment crime.⁴ In the twelve-months to 31 August 2013 there were:

- 1,010,000 calls for assistance to the police for domestic abuse – or one every 30 seconds
- 269,700 domestic abuse related crimes
- 6,400 domestic abuse related sexual offences
- 96,000 domestic abuse related assault with injury crimes
- 27,300 domestic abuse related harassment crimes
- 57,900 high risk of serious harm/murder cases referred to MARACs⁵

However, most women do not report, so we look at the Crime Survey England and Wales, which shows that in 2013/14 there were 1.4 million female victims and 700,000 male victims.

- 46% of women who are murdered are killed by a partner or ex-partner⁶
- Only 27% of domestic violence incidents suffered by women are reported to the police
- Women are more worried about rape than any other crime.⁷ 3,891 prosecutions for rape were completed in 2013-14 – continuing an upward trend.⁸ But still only 15% of rape victims report⁹
- Around 21% of girls and 11% of boys experience some form of childhood sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse is more likely to be experienced by children with a disability, missing or looked after children, and children living with domestic violence. Adult sexual violence and abuse is more likely to be experienced by people with a disability, people involved in prostitution, people who have been sexually abused as children and young women who have been drinking¹⁰
- Almost 800 women and girls were referred to the National Crime Agency last year as victims of sex trafficking (and 34 men/boys).¹¹ Almost 20% were children.¹² The true number of victims is unknown, but we know that the reported figure has grown year on year, with the number of adults increasing by 16% last year
- Women involved in prostitution experience disproportionately high levels of sexual and physical violence and emotional abuse. 89% want to stop selling sex, but have no way of doing so¹³
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): it is estimated¹⁴ that approximately 103,000 women aged 15-49 and approximately 24,000 women aged 50 and over are living with FGM. Approximately 10,000 girls aged under 15 are likely to have undergone FGM. Although around 7,000 girls in the UK are at risk, there are no good prevalence data, and no one has ever been convicted. But FGM clinics are overwhelmed by demand for health services and reversal surgery¹⁵
- Sexual harassment is a significant problem, particularly for vulnerable groups such as young girls and girls with learning disability. See the [Everyday Sexism](#) website for examples

Costs

- The costs of DV were estimated, using government costings methodology, at just under £16 billion a year in England and Wales alone in 2009¹⁶
- Sexual offending costs £8.46b per year, with each rape costing £96,000¹⁷

Services

- Recently specialist DV courts have been set up but not specialist sexual violence courts, despite a recommendation by the Home Affairs Select Committee.¹⁸ These have increased DV conviction rates but rape conviction rates remain significantly lower
- Services remain a postcode lottery – most refuges and rape crisis centres lack secure, sustainable funding. The austerity cuts have had a widespread effect: for example, a snapshot survey in 2011 showed that there was a 31% cut in funding from local authorities to the domestic violence and sexual abuse sector between 2010/11 to 2011/12, alone¹⁹
- 320 women, nearly 10% of those seeking refuge, were turned away by Women's Aid on a single day in 2011, due to lack of space²⁰
- Women and girls in some communities are more vulnerable than others to specific forms of violence – to FGM, forced marriage, murder in the name of so-called 'honour'; they need specialist services
- Women are stuck in violent relationships because their migration status is dependent on their husbands, and they are not allowed access to public funds – meaning destitution if they leave. Despite new exemptions for cases of domestic violence, many women still find it difficult to find sanctuary²¹
- Women in prison²² were more likely to report having experienced some sort of abuse than men (53% v 27%); of these, women were more likely to report suffering sexual abuse (67%) than men (24%). Women prisoners were more likely to report having observed violence at home when they were children, than men

Attitudes

- 36% believe that a woman should be held wholly or partly responsible for being sexually assaulted or raped if she was drunk; 26% believe a woman should accept at least part of the blame for an attack if she was out in public wearing sexy or revealing clothes²³

Where do we want to be?

- Change the culture around violence against women: reduce tolerance of DV, and end ambivalent attitudes about rape
- Prevention programmes, especially in schools; this should be a long term investment, to teach children and young people about equal, non-violent relationships between women and men
- Improve confidence in the criminal justice system, but also improve the availability of specialist counselling and support services for women who do not report – *still the overwhelming majority* – to meet women's needs
- Specialist courts to improve the experience of women as victims and witnesses
- Stabilise and secure the provision of the specialist sexual violence and domestic violence women's services run by third sector women's organisations.
- Awareness training on all forms of VAWG to explain what it means, so that front line professionals recognise it and know what to do, and standard service levels across the UK
- Prevalence data on sexual harassment; initiatives by employers and trade unions together
- Adoption of the Nordic Model.
- Public services designed with women's safety in mind – in public transport, public spaces

We need the different parts of government to work together, not separately, to implement a strategy on VAWG: that means different government departments and local agencies like the police, health trusts, and local authorities. We need to invest in better training and services for women, and in education for both children and perpetrators. We need to fund the women's VCS to provide better services, to provide expert advice to drive improvements, and we need to fund research to improve data on prevalence and causes of violence, and the best way to eliminate it.

How we'll know when we're there

- The use of violence to 'police' women is no longer part of the social construction of masculinity
- Women and girls are able to access women-only specialist services to help them rebuild their lives
- Data are routinely collected and published from the women's voluntary services sector as well as the criminal justice system, to capture data on the majority of women who do not report; and indicators on each issue show a downward trend/ elimination
- Children's attitudes change; the public no longer tolerates VAWG, or blames women for it; juries' attitudes change
- Government prioritises the issue and implements a securely funded strategic plan to end all forms of violence against women
- Media, and social media, coverage changes; violence against women is taken seriously and the true facts, for example about rape, are explained
- Research identifies new policy solutions, informed by women's first hand experiences
- Reporting rates increase as women's confidence grows; and then reduces as incidence declines
- Girls, black and minority ethnic women, travelling, transgender, disabled and lesbian women are no longer more vulnerable to violence
- The 'no recourse' rule is abolished, and safe options increased for women survivors of violence from abroad
- Women are no longer exploited through the sex 'trade'

¹ Violence against Women & Millennium Development Goals, UN Women, http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Media/Publications/UNIFEM/EVAWkit_02_VAWandMDGs_en.pdf

² The End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW) has developed a template UK strategy on Violence against Women with clear targets and actions: Realising Rights, Fulfilling Obligations, 2008. http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/resources/16/realising_rights.pdf

³ Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, EU Fundamental Rights Agency, 2014 http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-at-a-glance-oct14_en.pdf

⁴ Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse, HMIC, 2014 <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/improving-the-police-response-to-domestic-abuse.pdf>

⁵ MARACs: Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

⁶ Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2013/14 statistical bulletin on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) and crimes recorded by the police, ONS, 2015 Figure 2.4: Relationship of victim to principal suspect by sex of victim, 2013/14 <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tc%3A77-376027>

⁷ Home Office Research Study 237, Rape and sexual assault of women: the extent and nature of the problem, Findings from the British Crime Survey, Myhill and Allen, Home Office Research, 2002 <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110314171826/http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hors237.pdf>

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http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/cps_vawg_report_2014.pdf
- ⁹ An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales, Ministry of Justice, Home Office & the Office for National Statistics, Statistics bulletin, January 2013
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214970/sexual-offending-overview-jan-2013.pdf
- ¹⁰ Cross Government Action Plan on Sexual Violence and Abuse, 2007,
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/Sexual-violence-action-plan2835.pdf?view=Binary>
- ¹¹ National Referral Mechanism Statistics – End of Year Summary 2014, National Crime Agency, 19/01/2015
<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/national-referral-mechanism-statistics/502-national-referral-mechanism-statistics-end-of-year-summary-2014/file>
- ¹² A Strategic Assessment on the Nature and Scale of Human Trafficking in 2012, Serious Organized Crime Agency, 2012,
http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/ext-6538_ukhtc_strategic_assessment_on_human_trafficking_2012_v1.01.pdf
- ¹³ Prostitution and trafficking in nine countries: Update on violence and posttraumatic stress, Farley et al, 2003, Journal of Trauma Practice 2(3/4): 33–74
- ¹⁴ Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Female Genital Mutilation, Home Office 2014,
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380125/MultiAgencyPracticeGuidelinesNov14.pdf
- ¹⁵ The Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development
- ¹⁶ The Cost of Domestic Violence: Up-date 2009, Walby, 2009,
- ¹⁷ Home Office Sexual Violence Action Plan, 2012
- ¹⁸ 'Paragraph 94. We also recommend that the Ministry of Justice introduce specialist courts (similar to the domestic violence courts currently in existence) for child sexual abuse or sexual offences as a whole.' The Home Affairs Select Committee Report On Child Sexual Exploitation And The Response To Localised Grooming, 2013
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmhaff/68/6802.htm>
- ¹⁹ Measuring the impact of Cuts in public expenditure on the provision of services to prevent violence against women and girls, Towers and Walby, 2012, <http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/policy-change/strategic-work-item/measuring-the-impact-of-cuts-in-public-expenditure-on-the-provision-of-services-to-prevent-violence-against-women-and-girls/>
- ²⁰ ibid
- ²¹ The 'no recourse rule' <http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/campaigns.html#nrcampaign>
- ²² Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners, Ministry of Justice Research Series 4/12 March 2012,
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278837/prisoners-childhood-family-backgrounds.pdf
- ²³ Sexualisation of Young People Review, Papadopoulos, Home Office, 2010,
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/sexualisation-of-young-people.pdf>