

PARITY

Equal Rights for Men and Women

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UK Statistics Authority
London

Registered Charity No. 1107795

Member of the NCVO

16 APR 2009

Professor Sir Roger Jowell CBE
Deputy Chair of the UK Statistics Authority
Statistics House
Islington
London EC1R 1UW

Received



15 April 2009

Dear Sir Roger,

Misrepresentation of official statistics

May I thank you for your letter (copied to me) of the 20 March 2009 to Mr Keir Starmer QC, Director of Public Prosecutions, in support of our formal complaint of the 11 February 2009 to your Authority about the use of the term 'overwhelming majority' in a Crown Prosecution Service consultation document circulated publicly last autumn to describe the proportion of female victims of domestic violence.

I much appreciate confirmation by the Authority that this subjective description was not justified in the light of Home Office statistics. I should be most interested to learn of any response you receive from Mr Starmer to your letter.

May I enquire whether or not the Authority would have any objection to PARITY issuing a suitably worded press release on the matter?

As it happens, I have another complaint on the same issue to make, this time against the Home Office. On their website page relating to 'Domestic violence', the Home Office states that although "domestic violence occurs across all of society ... usually it takes the form of violence against women by men ..." See page download attached.

My complaint is that the use of the word 'usually' is an ambiguous and misleading description, which can be taken to imply strongly that most victims of domestic violence are women. As your Monitoring and Assessment Team noted in the case of the Crown Prosecution Service complaint, the most reliable statistics about the prevalence of domestic violence are considered to be given by the annual Home Office Statistical Bulletins. The Home Office should thus be well aware from these that male victims of domestic violence in England and Wales in 2007/08 accounted for between 38% and 48% of total victims, the higher figure relating to the more severe forms of physical assault between partners/ex-partners.

In the light of this reliable information, I consider it particularly reprehensible for the same Government department to use ambiguous and possibly misleading terminology about the issue in its publicity material. The Home Office Statistical Bulletins clearly do not show that domestic violence, particularly of the more severe forms, is 'usually' against women by men.

I regret therefore that I have again to make a formal complaint to your Authority about the misleading use of official statistics, this time by the Home Office itself.

Yours sincerely,

John Mays
Chair, PARITY

Chair: John Mays

Vice-Chair: Suresh Gupta

Hon Secretary: David Yarwood

Hon Treasurer: Paul Barnett

incorporating

Campaign for Equal State Pension Ages

CESPA

From Home Office website

Domestic violence

Whether it occurs in public or in private, violence is unacceptable and we are determined to do all we can to prevent it.

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is any threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship, or between family members. It can affect anybody, regardless of their gender or sexuality.

The violence can be psychological, physical, sexual or emotional. It can include 'honour-based violence', female genital mutilation, and forced marriage.

Do you need help?

If you're in a violent or abusive relationship, or if you're supporting somebody in that situation, help is available.

[Download our leaflet on domestic violence](#), which contains information that could help.

You can also find more information on the [Direct.gov website](#), ([new window](#)) and on websites of support groups such as [Refuge](#) ([new window](#)) and [Women's Aid](#) ([new window](#)).

At the bottom of this web page there's a list of helplines that can offer help.

Note: If you suspect your partner is monitoring your internet usage [you can hide your internet history](#). ([new window](#))

Whatever form it takes, domestic violence is rarely a one-off incident. Usually it's a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviour through which an abuser seeks power over their family member or partner.

Domestic violence occurs across all of society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth or geography. Usually it takes the form of violence against women by men, but children are also affected - they can be traumatised by what they've seen, and there is a strong connection between domestic violence and child abuse.

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims/reducing-crime/domestic-violence/

8 April 2009