
Ed Humpherson, Director General for Regulation

Ian McNicholls
Ambassador
Mankind Initiative
(by email)

20 March 2017

Dear Ian

Thank you for your sharing your concern about use of statistics on the number of homicide victims killed as a result of domestic violence. Your concern is illustrated by various recent examples, links to which you included in your email.

In looking at the issues you raised, we considered three factors:

- The relevant National Statistics
- Our expectations of official bodies (like the ONS and Government Departments) that publish official statistics
- How far these expectations apply to non-official bodies (like charities and the media) that interpret the statistics for a wider audience

In terms of the National Statistics, ONS's latest published statistics on this subject¹ show that, between April 2015 and March 2016, 77 female homicide victims and 28 male homicide victims were killed by a partner or ex-partner²; a combined total for all homicide victims of 105 killed by a partner or ex-partner. Between April 2008 and March 2009 the equivalent numbers were 102 female homicide victims, 32 male homicide victims – 134 homicide victims in total – killed by their partner or ex-partner (Figure 1).

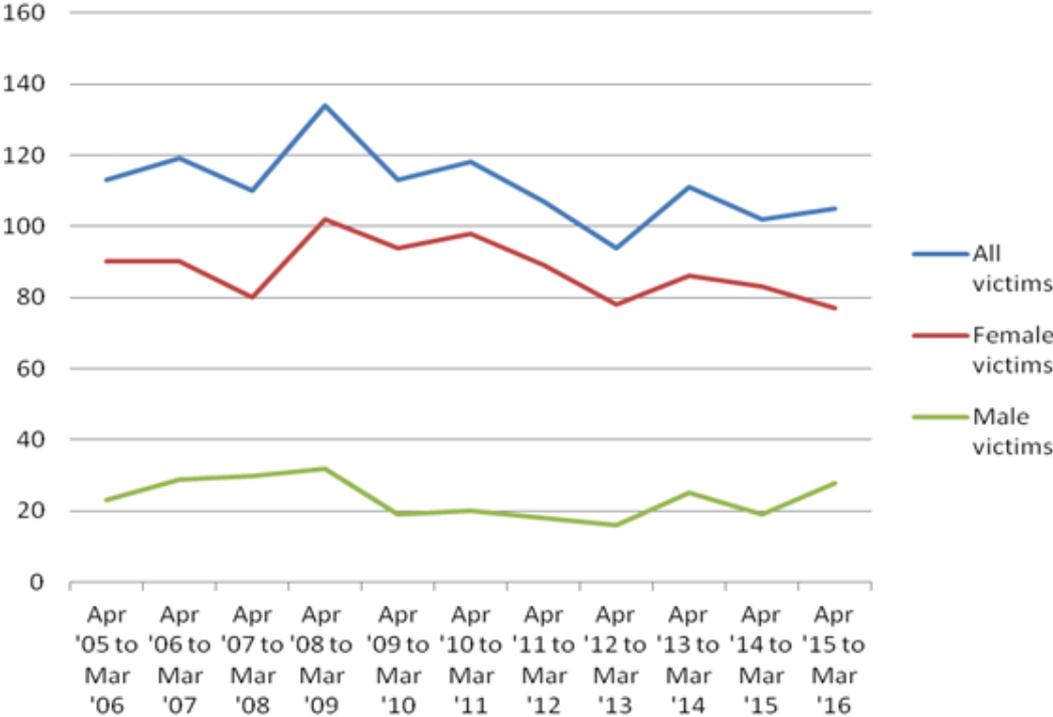
¹ The data was calculated using table 2.10 of the appendix tables:
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/appendixtablesfocusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2016/fovappendixtables.xls>

The numbers of homicides are reported in Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/compendium/focusonviolentcrimeandsexualoffences/yearendingmarch2016/homicide#how-are-victims-and-suspects-related>

² The definition of the term domestic violence varies. Conventionally, it has included abuse by a partner or ex-partner; the official government definition also includes abuse by a parent, son or daughter, siblings and other relatives.

Figure 1: Annual number of homicide victims killed by their partner or ex-partner over time in total and by sex



On our expectations of producers of official statistics, we would expect all official statistics to present a balanced picture; in this case that homicide where the perpetrator is a partner or ex-partner impacts on both women and men. We consider that ONS presents a clear picture that includes male and female homicide victims.

In terms of the wider use of these statistics, although this does not form part of the Authority’s core responsibility for official statistics³, we advocate that those using official statistics use up-to-date figures and accurately describe them, with any limitations (for example, in quality or coverage) recognised.

We also accept that, in public debate, organisations and individuals may select statistics to make a specific point. When they do so by re-using a particular statistic without confirmation, there is a risk that it becomes out-of-date, is not the most relevant statistic or that it inadvertently promotes an incomplete view. To reduce this risk, organisations should regularly check to the relevant source (in this case, the National Statistics published by ONS) to ensure that the figures are not out of date, and are still relevant and complete.

In short, we would encourage those using statistics in public debate to adhere to the principles I have outlined above.

Kind regards,

Ed Humpherson
Ed Humpherson

³ Under Section 7(1) of the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007, the objective of the UK Statistics Authority is ‘promoting and safeguarding the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good’.