



**Call for submissions by the UN Special  
Rapporteur on violence against women on  
Femicide Related Data and Information**

**23 November 2020**

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## Women's Aid Information & Statistics

### Who We Are

Women's Aid is the lead voluntary organisation in Northern Ireland addressing domestic and sexual violence and providing services for women and children. Women's Aid exists to challenge attitudes and beliefs which perpetuate domestic violence. We work to promote healthy, non-abusive relationships.

**Our vision is the elimination of domestic and sexual violence**

### What We Do

Women's Aid supports all women and children affected by domestic violence. We work to help women and children be safe, to break free from the cycle of violence, and to rebuild their lives. Women's Aid has nine local groups and one regional umbrella body covering the whole of Northern Ireland, and our wraparound services are available across Northern Ireland. Our core work includes:

- Refuge accommodation for women and their children suffering domestic violence.
- Support services to enable women affected by domestic and/or sexual violence to rebuild their lives and the lives of their children.
- Support services for children and young people who have experienced domestic violence.
- Preventative education programmes in schools and other settings.
- Educating and raising awareness among the public, media, police, courts, social services and other agencies of the impact of domestic and sexual violence.
- Advising and supporting other agencies in responding to domestic & sexual violence.
- Working in partnership with other agencies to ensure a joined-up response to domestic and sexual violence.

Throughout this response, the term "Women's Aid" refers to the overall Women's Aid movement in Northern Ireland, including our local groups and Women's Aid Federation.

### Domestic & Sexual Violence in 2019-20: a year in numbers

- **561** women and **316** children stayed in a Women's Aid refuge.
- **36** pregnant women were supported in refuge and **205** pregnant women accessed outreach services.
- **11** babies were born to women in refuge.

- **5,536** women and **5,143** children accessed Women’s Aid outreach services, enabling them to get support while staying in their own homes.
- **1,197** women took part in programmes run by Women’s Aid, including our *Journey to Freedom* and *You and Me, Mum* programmes.
- We trained **168** teachers across **105** primary schools to deliver the *Helping Hands* preventative education programme.

### 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.<sup>1</sup>

### Crime Statistics 2019-20

- Domestic Violence is a crime. Domestic abuse crimes (**18,640**) accounted for **17.5% of all crime** reported to the PSNI.
- Police responded to a domestic incident **every 17 minutes** of every day of the year.
- Between 2019 – 2020 (statistics captured over financial year), there were **2 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.

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<sup>1</sup>Findings 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

## Introduction

Women's Aid welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence and information on rates of femicide in Northern Ireland to the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović. There has been a marked increase in domestic abuse rates across Northern Ireland since the beginning of lockdown on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 and unfortunately we have seen the murder of 5 women by a male partner or relative. Our organisation appreciates all effort to highlight femicide, and gender-based harm more generally, internationally. Domestic abuse is another way in which women have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19 and it is integral to acknowledge that in order to address this issue.

This submission will be structured around the four questions outlined by the Special Rapporteur. Some questions do not fall under the expertise of our organisation and as a result have been left out of the submission.

## Submission Response

**a. The existence of, or progress in, the creation of a national femicide watch and/or observatory on violence against women, or any plans to do so.**

Northern Ireland currently has no dedicated national femicide watch and/or observatory. Data is available on murders by gender through statistics collated by the Police Service of Northern Ireland. We would note here that data is not given in relation to the gender of the murderer. Data on the gender of the perpetrator would be useful when framing violence against men, particularly in conjunction with the relationship to the victim.

**b. Other measures or research and studies undertaken to prevent femicide or gender related killings of women, or homicide of women, by intimate partners or family members.**

Currently the United Kingdom has no dedicated national femicide watch aside from generic data on domestic homicide collated by the Office of National Statistics. However, a femicide census is produced and updated by a Non-Governmental Organisation founded by a group of academics [[www.femicidecensus.org/](http://www.femicidecensus.org/)]. This Femicide Census does include women from Northern Ireland who have been killed by a male partner or relative.

**c. Information on the results of analysis of femicide cases, including the review of previous court cases and actions undertaken in this respect.**

No agency in Northern Ireland currently provides analysis or information on femicide cases. Domestic Homicide Reviews are due to begin in December 2020. These Reviews will analyse incidents of domestic homicide, looking at the case in depth and reviewing the intervention

or lack thereof from relevant agencies to determine if there is any learning to be taken from the homicide to improve responses in the future. We welcome the introduction of these Domestic Homicide Reviews, particularly as we have been waiting on their implementation for some time and given the rise in femicide in NI during the Coronavirus lockdown. We do note that these reviews are not specifically focused on cases where there has been a female victim and will also apply to cases where a male has been murdered with a domestic motivation.

- d. Administrative data (by numbers and percentage) on homicide/femicide or gender-related killings of women for the last 3 years (2018-2020), disaggregated as follows:**
- i. The total number of homicides of women and men**
  - ii. The number of intimate partner homicides/femicides, (i.e. based on the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, the number of women and number of men killed by their partners/ex-partners, husband/ex-husband etc.)**
  - iii. The number of family related homicide/femicide of men and of women (i.e. based on the family relationship between the victim and perpetrator, the number of women and number of men killed by their family members, but not by intimate partners )**
  - iv. Other femicides or killings of women by unrelated perpetrator/s but gender-related or with a sexual motive;**
  - v. Data if available, disaggregated as above, of femicide during the Covid-19 pandemic (indicating the time period e.g. since March 2020 to the end of October 2020) and its comparison with such data before the COVID-19 pandemic.**

*If feasible, the data could perhaps be provided in table format, similar to the example provided below:*

<b>Year From/To*</b>	<b>Total number of homicides** of women /men (% included)</b>	<b>Total number homicide/femicide of women/ men killed by intimate partners</b>	<b>Total number homicide /femicide of women/ men killed by a family member</b>	<b>Other gender related killings of women by unrelated perpetrator</b>
2017-2018	23 total homicides. 11 with a domestic motivation 7 women 4 men	3 women 1 man 4 total	4 women 3 men 7 total	

2018-2019	21 total homicides. 4 with a domestic abuse motivation: 4 women 0 men	3 women 0 men 3 total	1 woman 0 men 1 total	
2019-2020 (ends March 2020)	Total number of murders unreleased. 5 murders with a domestic motivation 2 women*** 3 men	Data unreleased at time of submission	Data unreleased at time of submission	

Evidence gathered from PSNI statistics<sup>2</sup>

\*Domestic abuse and homicide data in NI is captured over the course of a financial year, ie April 1<sup>st</sup> – March 31<sup>st</sup>.

\*\*Information on the gender breakdown of general homicide not found

\*\*\*Both women murdered during March 2020 while under Covid-19 lockdown

### **Homicide during Covid-19 lockdown**

During the Covid-19 lockdown there have been 5 women murdered by a male partner or relative<sup>3</sup>. 2 women were murdered by a male relative while 3 women were murdered by an intimate partner. The way that the PSNI records statistics means that two of these femicides have been included in 2019/20 statistics as they took place in March, while the remaining three will be carried over into 2020/21 statistics.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/domestic-abuse-statistics/2018-19/domestic-abuse-incident-and-crimes-in-northern-ireland-2004-05-to-2018-19.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-52440662>; <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-53634779>; <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2020/08/18/news/murder-investigation-launched-after-death-of-woman-in-south-belfast-2038770/>