



Violence against women and girls

Referrals analysis

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This project forms part of the IOPC's thematic focus on violence against women and girls (VAWG). It comes as part of a rising concern nationally about VAWG and also in response to the Centre for Women's Justice (CWJ) super-complaint about police-perpetrated domestic abuse (PPDA).

As part of our thematic work, we conducted a statistical analysis of the referrals we received to establish what we already hold and know in this area and to assess what police forces are referring. See [IOPC Statutory Guidance](#) for an explanation of the mandatory referral criteria.

Our analysis is aimed primarily at policing stakeholders. It represents the baseline or starting point that we will use to compare and monitor VAWG-related referral rates. Police forces can use this data to review their own referral rates and consider how they are assessing complaint and conduct matters about violence against women and girls.

Data set

April 2021 - March 2022

5,283 referrals received by the IOPC between April 2021 and March 2022



1429 referrals reviewed

1,429 referrals reviewed with relevant* case factors (*see Annex A)

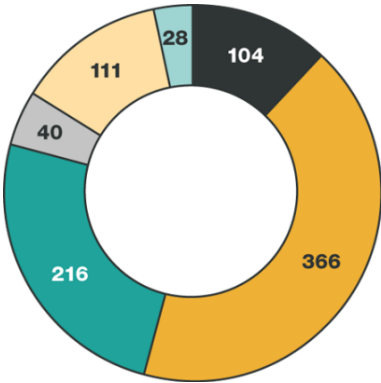
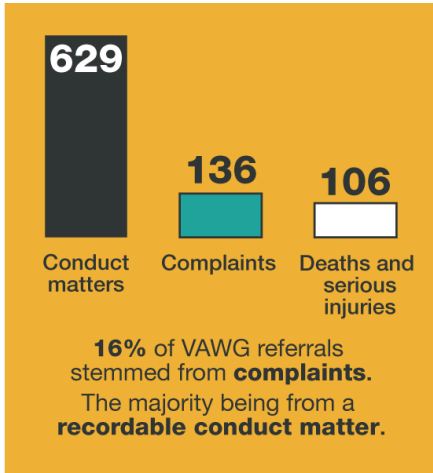
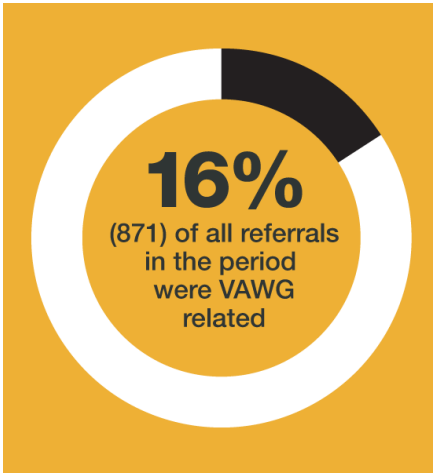


871 VAWG referrals

871 referrals met the IOPC definition of VAWG and are included in this analysis

See [Annex B](#) for data caveats.

Key findings



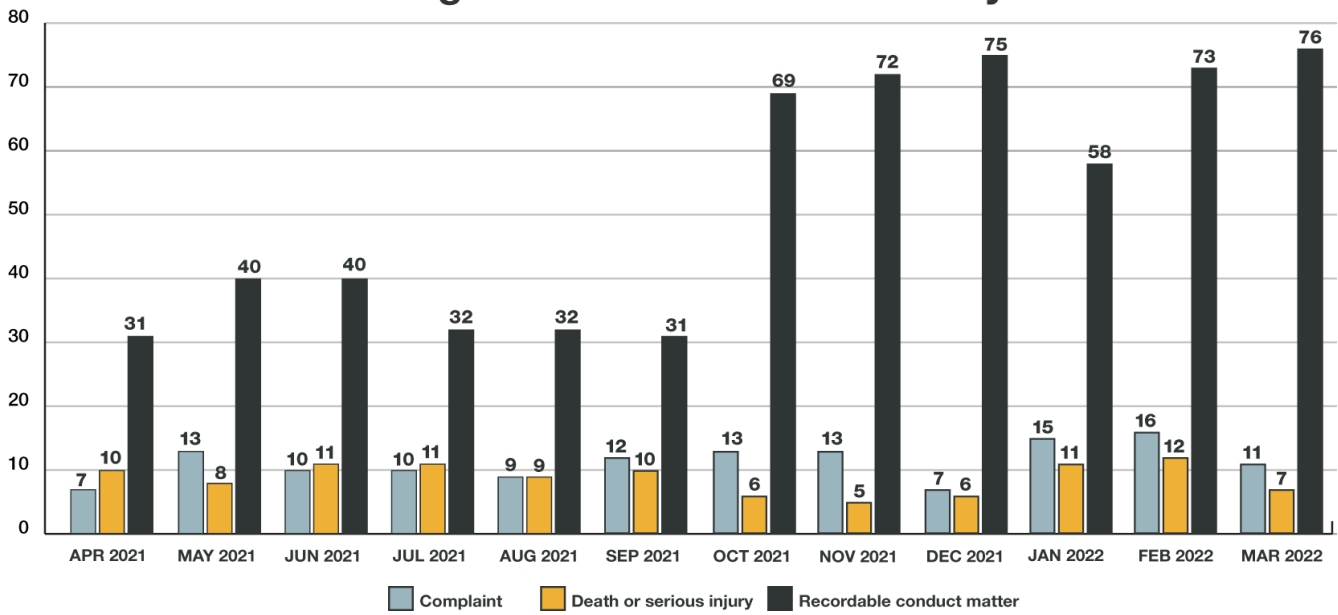
- 1.VAWG
- 1a. VAWG: Perpetrator is police employee
- 1b. VAWG: Perpetrator and victim are police employees
- 1c. VAWG: Dissatisfied with handling
- 2. Police-perperated domestic violence
- 2a. Police-perperated domestic violence: Police victim

Almost half (42%) of VAWG referrals received during the relevant period relate to the **VAWG: police perpetrator** subcategory.

16% (139) of all VAWG referrals were **police-perpetrated domestic abuse**.

3% Police perpetrated domestic abuse **where the victim is a police officer** makes up the smallest category of VAWG referrals (28).

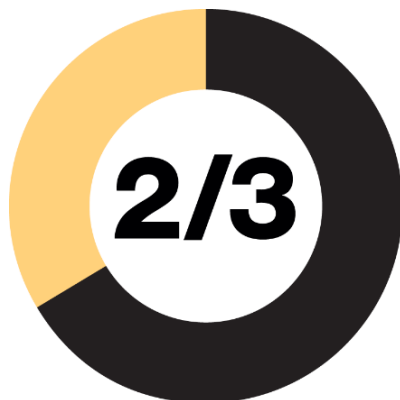
Changes in VAWG referrals over year



There was a significant and sustained rise in conduct referrals from October 2021 onwards for VAWG matters only. The sentencing of former police officer, Wayne Couzens, for the murder of Sarah Everard occurred on 30 September 2021 and this could account for the rise in referral rates.

During this time, there was also a significant focus on police-perpetrated domestic abuse after the Centre for Women’s Justice made its super-complaint in March 2020.

For context, please note that overall referral rates have been rising each year. Overall referrals increased by 7% year on year from 2018/19 to 2020/21 and increased by 16% in 2021/22.



of forces (30) made **no referrals** concerning **police victims of police perpetrated domestic abuse.**

Did you know?

IOPC's position on off-duty conduct

In violence against women and girls' cases, referrals received involving **police victims** and/or **off-duty conduct** are **as serious** and attach **no less public interest** than allegations which involve members of the public and occur on duty.

The investigation into the Centre for Women's Justice super-complaint found that police forces frequently placed too much emphasis on alleged abuse occurring off-duty, when making decisions about officer conduct and whether it could bring the police service into disrepute. The report also highlighted serious concerns about the treatment of **police victims** of police-perpetrated domestic abuse.

The Standards of Professional Behaviour apply to on and off-duty conduct. However, the Standards of Professional Behaviour and the obligations that they impose will be assessed in context, which includes whether they are on or off-duty at the material time. Police officers have a right to a private life, which must be factored into any assessment. Assessments of seriousness and public interest should include consideration of whether the off-duty behaviour **discredits** the police service.

The [*College of Policing Guidance on Outcomes in Police Misconduct Proceedings*](#) states that *"violence against women and girls perpetrated by a police officer, whether on-duty or off-duty, will always harm public confidence in policing, since this is inimical to the values of modern policing and the Standards of Professional Behaviour"*.

Next steps

We will continue our thematic focus on cases involving violence against women and girls. We will work with police forces and local policing bodies and use this report as the basis for discussions. As a result of this analysis we will:



include violence against women and girls' referrals on the agenda of our next meeting with all police forces and local policing bodies



ask police forces if they are satisfied with the data on their force's referrals and if they have a good understanding of the mandatory referral criteria as it applies to violence against women and girls cases



conduct periodic analysis of referrals about violence against women and girls to track referral rates over time and to draw comparisons

Annex A – Case Factors

Before December 2022, the IOPC did not have specific case factors for violence against women and girls, so we needed to rely on existing case factors and data fields to filter the data as far as possible. The list below provides the relevant case factors that applied to this data set:

Child abuse including sexual

- Sexual exploitation/abuse
- Neglect /physical abuse (non-sexual)
- Other child abuse

Corruption/perjury

- Abuse of powers for sexual gain
- Abuse of authority (non-sexual)

Domestic/gender abuse

- Domestic violence
- Stalking and harassment
- Honour crimes
- Other domestic/gender abuse

Sexual assault/harassment

- Sexual assault
- Sexual harassment

Discrimination

- Gender/gender reassignment

Social media

Annex B – Data caveats

When applying the IOPC definition of violence against women and girls to the cases, only one overriding factor could be selected. This is due to the limitation of the spreadsheet used and the case management system. From December 2022, the full range of factors in the case management system will be available.

Individuals applying case factors will always carry an element of subjectivity.

The case type is subject to change throughout the life of a case. For example, if we received a death or serious injury referral and then received a complaint on the same matter, the case type would become a complaint.

As this is the first referrals analysis conducted specifically on violence against women and girls, there is no previous analysis to draw from to establish patterns and trends in the rate or type of VAWG related referrals. This data set and the analysis conducted will, however, act as a baseline for future referrals analysis.

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