



“It’s a Hidden Problem”



Media Toolkit
Jersey VAWG Taskforce

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Introduction

Reporting on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a complex and sensitive subject, which can have the ability to create positive change. The media therefore has a responsibility in how it influences public opinion and attitudes towards VAWG.¹

Unfortunately, recent research has highlighted how many media outlets can misrepresent and oversimplify issues of VAWG.² This can inadvertently encourage victim-blaming, stigmatising women's behaviour, and can ultimately contribute towards VAWG.³

In response, many organisations, charities, and governments have helped to create comprehensive guidelines and resources to foster responsible and sensitive coverage of VAWG.⁴

The Government of Jersey has also taken steps in this direction, creating the following dedicated toolkit to provide media outlets with the tools needed to ensure reporting on VAWG adheres to best practice.

We aim to improve the overall quality of coverage, prevent women from experiencing unnecessary trauma from public exposure, and discourage the misrepresentation of VAWG which helps to fuel this cycle of violence.

In creating this toolkit, we are also recognising the power of reporting to potentially save lives, since when done respectfully and sensitively, reporting can act as a lifeline for those in need, encouraging

¹ Easteal, P., Holland, K. and Judd, K., 2015, January. Enduring themes and silences in media portrayals of violence against women. In Women's Studies International Forum (Vol. 48, pp. 103-113). Pergamon

² Wright, P.J. and Tokunaga, R.S., 2016. Men's objectifying media consumption, objectification of women, and attitudes supportive of violence against women. Archives of sexual behaviour, 45, pp.955-964

³ Vaughan, C., Sutherland, G., McCormack, A., Pirkis, J., Easteal, P. and Holland, K., 2015. Media representations of violence against women and their children: State of knowledge paper. ANROWS.

Easteal, P., Holland, K. and Judd, K., 2015, January. Enduring themes and silences in media portrayals of violence against women. In Women's Studies International Forum (Vol. 48, pp. 103-113). Pergamon.

⁴ Vaughan, C., Sutherland, G., McCormack, A., Pirkis, J., Easteal, P. and Holland, K., 2015. Media representations of violence against women and their children: State of knowledge paper. ANROWS.

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women and girls to seek support. Together we can foster a culture of respect, support, and positive change for these women and girls.

Respect and consent

Report VAWG with respect for victim-survivor dignity, anonymity, and safety –

- Avoid sensationalising or trivialising any incident a victim-survivor has experienced
- Refrain from misrepresenting the facts, such as using romantic motives to justify violence. E.g., The victim-survivor and perpetrator ended their relationship, and the crime is then reported to having been carried out due to the perpetrator having a ‘broken heart’, being ‘frustrated’ or ‘rejection’⁵
- If anonymity is not given to victim-survivors and the report is considered triggering for the victim-survivor in this incident or other victim-survivors who have also experienced similar violence previously, this can result in further trauma for them. Without anonymity, the perpetrator may also inflict further violence towards the victim-survivor.

Ensure victim-survivors are aware they can withdraw their consent at any time without pressure, blaming or shaming⁶

Jigsaw identification – Jigsaw identification refers to ‘the ability to identify someone by using two or more different pieces of information from two or more sources when the person’s identity is meant to be confidential or protected.’⁷

Information could include age, medical records, the name of their work, address of theirs or their child(ren)’s school(s). Details can also be disclosed in photographs of victim-survivors. Even if their face is blurred a visible tattoo or distinctive item of clothing may result in identification.⁸

As Jersey is a small jurisdiction, the risk of such identification is higher compared to larger regions including the UK. Therefore, the upmost caution must be exercised when reporting details about the victim-survivor to guarantee their anonymity. If one media outlet believes they have anonymised the victim-survivor by only reporting one detail about the individual, but other media outlets in Jersey also report on one other detail, the chances of identifying the individual increases when all the details from all the reports are combined. Jigsaw identification can result in further suffering for the victim-survivor and/or their family e.g. the victim-survivor may feel humiliated, or the victim-survivor may endure further violence from the perpetrator⁹

⁵ [How language trivialises violence against women - Hope for the Future](#)

⁶ [Ibid](#)

⁷ [Guidance to judges on the anonymisation of children judgements - Nuffield Foundation](#)

⁸ [Practice Direction - RC 19-02-Prevention of Identification of Children in Public Law Cases \(jerseylaw.ie\)](#)

⁹ [Microsoft Word - GDPR GN 5 Ident, anon, pseudon v2019-09-12 \(ukri.org\)](#)

Awareness

Understand what VAWG looks like concerning perpetrators and victim-survivor's actions/behaviours –

The term, Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), recognises that gender-based violence and abuse has a disproportionate impact on females, including physical, sexual, and psychological harm or suffering. It involves various acts, including threats, coercion, and deprivation of freedom. Men and boys, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender individuals may also face violence, often due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.¹⁰

Violence can take multiple forms, including but not exclusive to:

- Physical – Including beating and strangulation
- Sexual- non-consensual sex, rape, sexual assault, harassment, or if the victim-survivor is unable to give legal consent, e.g. children, people with specific mental disabilities, people drugged, inebriated, or in an otherwise altered state
- Psychological – Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Financial – Controlling financial resources, withholding access to money, or not allowing the individual to attend work, school, or other locations¹¹

Understand what causes VAWG –

- **VAWG is caused by gender inequality** whereby men as a whole have a disproportionate amount of power and privilege in our society, over and above women resulting in sexism and misogyny, which then contributes ultimately to VAWG¹²
- **Men's control of decision-making** – In some relationships, males control decision-making and limit a woman's autonomy as they have a sense of ownership over said woman. These behaviours are also found throughout public life, where a woman's independence and power are often lesser than that of men. This can create the impression that women have lower social value and are less worthy of respect¹³
- **Cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression and control** – Male peer relationships (personal and professional) can display attitudes and behaviours towards masculinity which centre on aggression, control, dominance, or hypersexuality, which are all associated with violence against women¹⁴

The context of VAWG and the prevalence of the problem – Use statistics to demonstrate how frequently VAWG occurs, and that the reported incident does not exist in isolation but is part of broader systemic issues. Use a variety of resources provided by local, national, and international organisations, including 'Our Watch',¹⁵ 'Women's Aid',¹⁶ and 'United Nations'.¹⁷

- **Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity** – Promoting and reinforcing stereotypes leads to gender inequality, which then contributes to VAWG. By recognising this,

¹⁰ [About violence against women and girls \(gov.ie\)](#)

¹¹ Ibid

¹² <https://rm.coe.int/chapter-4-themes-related-to-gender-and-gender-based-violence-gender-ma/16809e159b>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ [Our Watch home | Preventing violence against women and their children - Our Watch](#)

¹⁶ [Home - Women's Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁷ [United Nations | Peace, dignity, and equality on a healthy planet](#)

journalists can reshape the narratives surrounding VAWG.¹⁸ The condoning of violence against women and girls in conjunction with the normalisation of misogynistic attitudes can escalate the risk that VAWG will occur. These 'normalised' behaviours include trivialising, justifying, or excusing violence or shifting blame from the perpetrator to the victim¹⁹

- **Victim-survivor conduct (outside of Court)** - Do not include details about the victim-survivor that imply the victim's behaviour caused or justifies the crime. This includes reporting on what the victim-survivor was wearing at the time of the incident, their sexual history, or their substance use, as this can be viewed as 'justifying' or 'trivialising' VAWG and excusing the perpetrator's actions.
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- **Victim-survivor conduct (inside of Court)** - Court reporting should not focus on the victim's appearance or behaviour during the trial, as these details can distract from the crime in question. Be clear that personal characteristics of the victim do not determine the severity or impact of the case, highlighting such details could lead to victim-blaming, with readers perceiving the victim-survivor as less-deserving of victim status dependant on their behaviour.

Vocabulary

- **Name the crime** - Use vocabulary that accurately describes the crime: e.g., 'violence against women', 'domestic abuse', 'rape', 'murder', 'child sexual abuse', 'coercive control'. Terms to be avoided include 'sex', 'sex case', 'domestic dispute', etc.²⁰
- **Know when to use 'victim' or 'survivor'** - Use 'victim' when discussing the crime or when a woman describes herself as such. Use 'victim-survivor' if you are unsure. Only use a woman's name if you have explicit permission. Use 'victim' or the woman's name when an attack has resulted in death.²¹
- **Do not use sexualised or graphic language or descriptions** – Using graphic or sexualised language can not only be humiliating and dehumanising for the victim-survivor and/or her family, friends and other victims but can also be retraumatising. Reporting unnecessary details about the incident, violence, or extent of the injuries towards the victim-survivor. Including graphic vocabulary and imagery can also result in further trauma for the victim-survivor of the incident, as well as other victims of VAWG who may be exposed to the report. Examples of sexualised or graphic language include 'Grabbed between legs- sex attack on 22-year-old'.²² This Austrian newspaper headline from 'Kronen Zeitung' caused outrage. Using such language can humiliate and dehumanise the victim-survivor and /or her family, friends, or other victim-survivors.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ [The issue | Our Watch | Preventing violence against women - Our Watch](#)

²⁰ <https://www.zerotolerance.org.uk/resources/Media-Guidelines-on-Violence-Against-Women.pdf>

²¹ Ibid

²² [Kronen Zeitung | Latest News | krone.at](#)

Voices

- **Prioritise the experts and victim-survivor's voices in the story** – Ensure the reporting centres around the victim-survivor and the voices that matter. By taking a more empathic position as a writer will contribute to the shaping and tone of the reporting itself, alongside assisting in the reshaping of the VAWG narrative more broadly.
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- **Ensure the perpetrator does not have a platform** – Avoid quoting the perpetrator as it can normalise their attitudes and retraumatise victim-survivors. This can also provide the opportunity for the perpetrator to develop their own narrative of the incident.
- **Represent diverse stories** by including women's voices not typically heard within current affairs e.g., the elderly, ethnic minorities, mentally and or physically disabled women. When reporting on an ethnic minority or religious group, try not to stigmatise said group. For example, when reporting on violence relating to harmful practices such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, or honour-based violence ensure you are clear this violence is rooted in misogyny.
- **Use an active voice to denounce perpetrators and provide context without justifying the crime** – For example, do not present the crime as a 'tragic/unfortunate ending to a love story', or refer to the crime as an 'affair; 'sex scandal' etc. These and similar statements can be found through VAWG reporting and can minimise or even normalise this behaviour'.²³

Appropriateness of imagery and multimedia

- **Stay in communication with the victim-survivor you are reporting on throughout the reporting process whenever possible** – While it may not always be possible, for instance, when reporting on a trial, try to establish contact with the victim-survivor before publishing a report. This allows them the opportunity to review any images or content related to their case. By doing so, you help prevent inflicting additional trauma on the victim-survivor.
- **Do not use or re-enact images that sexualise the victim-survivor, sensationalise the incident, or minimise the harassment** – By sexualising the victim-survivor you can dehumanise and humiliate them. It can also be upsetting for friends, family, and other victim-survivors of VAWG.
- **Avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes** regarding race, gender, sexuality, age, or disability. Use imagery that represents women from all backgrounds to prevent the reinforcing the belief that VAWG only happens to young, white, non-disabled women.
- **Be respectful** – Before choosing the picture, question what the picture represents.

²³ [Guidelines WEB-VERSION-ENG.pdf \(undp.org\)](#)

1. Avoid using photos that disclose the victims address or face if they wish to remain anonymous
2. Journalists use stock images²⁴ if necessary, but avoid using random and unrepresentative pictures that reinforce outdated attitudes
3. Obtain permission from the family or next of kin before using a photo of a woman who has been murdered
4. Refrain from reproducing abusive or malicious social media posts or images to protect victim-survivors and prevent further harm.

Support

- **Support for readers** – Readers may be affected by the topics discussed within the article. By providing sources of support, it can encourage women to seek help.

The following is a list of organisations that can be included in VAWG articles:

- Domestic Abuse: [Jersey Domestic Abuse Support \(jdas.je\)](http://jdas.je)
 - Sexual Assault and rape: [JAAR – Jersey Action Against Rape – Preventing and healing the trauma of rape and sexual abuse](#) or [Dewberry House S.A.R.C, Jersey](#)
 - Economic Abuse: [Jersey Women's Refuge \(jerseywomensrefuge.org\)](http://jerseywomensrefuge.org) or [Financial and economic abuse - Women's Aid \(womensaid.org.uk\)](http://financialandeconomicabuse-womensaid.org.uk) (UK) or [The Financial Support Line for Victims of Domestic Abuse \(moneysupportline.org.uk\)](http://moneysupportline.org.uk) (UK)
 - Online abuse [Online abuse – SARSAS](#) (UK) or [NSPCC Learning homepage - safeguarding training and resources](#) (UK)
- **Support for journalists** – Working with victim-survivors and hearing their stories has an emotional effect on journalists, which can become a mental health issue. Please ensure you seek the necessary support for yourself and your colleagues.

²⁴ [Stock Images of VAWG | Zero Tolerance](#)