

Research on Violence Against Women and Girls in Jersey

Lot 2 – Analysis of victim-survivors testimonials

Government of Jersey

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report outlines the findings from analysis of 28 anonymous testimonials collected by the Government of Jersey about their experiences of sexual harassment. The testimonial collection was part of a larger programme of research commissioned by the Government of Jersey to inform the work of the VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) Taskforce. The research aims to establish the range and types of violence experienced by women and girls in Jersey to ensure prevention strategies and support for survivors are firmly grounded in the Island's unique context.
- 1.2 The specific objectives for this research were:
- To better understand the prevalence, frequency, patterns and consequences of violence against women and girls.
 - To understand victim-survivors' experience of the criminal justice system and support services and how this can be improved.
 - To understand the barriers that prevent individuals from reporting this type of violence, and how underreporting of this nature can be reduced.

Background

- 1.3 The #MeToo movement prompted an increased focus for policy-makers around the world on whether enough is being done to prevent VAWG. The movement shone a light on the extent to which sexual violence and harassment can go unacknowledged and unreported and drew attention to a need for co-ordinated effort to make private and public spaces safer.
- 1.4 In the wake of the tragic case of Sarah Everard (who was murdered by a serving police officer while walking home from a friend's house during the Covid pandemic in the UK) and the subsequent public conversation on the safety of women and girls, the UK Home Secretary reopened the government's call for evidence on tackling crimes that disproportionately affect women. Following this, July 2021 saw the UK Government publish a strategy for tackling Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG).¹ This set out an ambition to increase support for victims and survivors, increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice and reduce the prevalence of VAWG in the long term.
- 1.5 In parallel, the Government of Jersey (GoJ) is developing its own strategy for addressing VAWG on the Island. Jersey is a very unique context and strategies that work for the UK may not always translate well. The comparative size and geography of Jersey creates some opportunities in terms of the potential for facilitating rapid cross-agency working and enforcement of new policies. At the same time, there is a particularly strong challenge around ensuring confidentiality for victims who wish to remain anonymous.
- 1.6 The development of this strategy is the responsibility of the VAWG Taskforce which has been established by the Minister for Home Affairs. The membership of the taskforce is comprised of

¹ Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls, UK Government - [Tackling violence against women and girls \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94444/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls.pdf)

key stakeholders working within the criminal justice sector, VAWG specialist support organisations and community support organisations.

Methodology

- 1.7 This report is based on 28 testimonials, gathered anonymously from members of the public via the VAWG 'Have Your Say' area of the Government of Jersey website (<https://haveyoursay.gov.je/consult/tj9rjk>) between 10th October 2022 and 19th January 2023. People were invited to anonymously share their experiences of violence against women and girls in Jersey.
- 1.8 The opportunity to 'share your story' was promoted (alongside the VAWG general public survey survey) by the Government of Jersey through social media campaigns, newspaper advertisements, advertisements on public transport and infrastructure, advertisements within VAWG specialist support organisation and community organisations, and community outreach events.
- 1.9 Participants were asked to share their testimonial by responding in open-text format to three questions:
- *What would you like to tell us about your experience(s) of violence against women and girls in Jersey? Please tell us anything you feel comfortable writing about, you do not need to tell us about your experience of violence. You might want to write about your reporting experience, accessing support or how you were treated by the criminal justice system.*
 - *How has your experience(s) of violence against women and girls impacted on your life?*
 - *What would you like to see done to address violence against women and girls in Jersey?*
- 1.10 The 28 respondents were fairly homogenous in their demographic make-up; all respondents were white, most were female (n=27) and the majority were heterosexual (n=19). Respondents did vary by age, with four respondents under 19 years old, six respondents between 20 and 34 years old, 15 respondents between 35 and 54 years old and three respondents older than 55. A full breakdown of the demographic profile of participants is shown below in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 The profile of participants who submitted testimonials.

Age		
	Number of testimonials	
Under 19	4	14%
20 to 34	6	21%
35 to 54	15	54%
Over 55	3	11%
Cultural and ethnic background		
Summary: White	28	100%
Jersey	19	68%
British	7	25%
Irish	1	4%
Other white background	1	4%
Gender		
Female	27	96%
Non-binary	1	4%
Sexual orientation		
Straight/heterosexual	22	79%
Bisexual	3	11%
Gay or Lesbian	2	7%
Not Answered	1	4%
Ease of coping financially		
Easy	8	29%
Neither easy or difficult	9	32%
Difficult	9	32%
Prefer not to say	2	7%
Physical or mental disabilities		
No	10	36%
Yes	14	50%
Prefer not to say	4	14%
How do you occupy your home		
Owner occupied	13	46%
Qualified private rent	9	32%
Social housing rent	2	7%
Prefer not to say	4	14%
TOTAL	28	100%

This report

1.11 This report presents the findings from the 28 testimonials. The report is split into 5 chapters, an introduction chapter then three subsequent chapters centred around one of the three questions listed above followed by a chapter of conclusions. Typically, responses to the first question; 'tell us about your experiences of VAWG in Jersey', were the longest and most detailed. Responses

to questions two and three were notably shorter and this is reflected in the structure of this report.

- Chapter 1: Introduction chapter provides an overview of the background and methodology of this qualitative element of the report.
- Chapter 2 gives an overview of the experiences described in the testimonials, as well as covering where and why VAWG takes place where it does, and what respondents' experiences of reporting their experiences were like.
- Chapter 3 explores the ways in which their experiences of sexual harassment and violence have impacted the lives of women and girls in Jersey. It begins by looking at the actions they have taken in response to their experiences, and then explores the effects on their mental health and their personal lives.
- Chapter 4 presents actions that testimonial respondents would like to see taken to address violence against women and girls in Jersey. The suggestions are grouped into actions around education, support services and the justice system.
- Chapter 5 delivers conclusions based on the findings in this report in relation to the three objectives listed above.

1.12 Throughout the report, there is a series of composite case studies. These case studies are compiled from multiple testimonials and are used to illustrate the ways in which VAWG is affecting the lives of women and girls in Jersey without jeopardising the anonymity of any individual respondent.

2 Personal experiences of violence against women and girls in Jersey

- 2.1 This chapter gives an overview of the experiences described in the testimonials. It explores the various relationships between victim-survivors and the perpetrators, as well as covering where and why VAWG takes place where it does, and what respondents' experiences of reporting their VAWG experiences were like.

The relationship between the perpetrators of VAWG and victims-survivors.

- 2.2 Respondents mentioned a range of experiences which can broadly be grouped into violence against women and girls experienced from strangers, colleagues, or acquaintances and experiences within the bounds of an intimate relationship.

VAWG outside of intimate relationships

- 2.3 Experiences of VAWG outside of intimate relationships were most commonly perpetrated by strangers in public places. An exception was experiences occurring in a woman's place of work, where interactions took place within a professional relationship.

Experience of VAWG by strangers in public places

- 2.4 One of the main behaviours that respondents reported experiencing outside of relationships was inappropriate comments and catcalling. These took the form of uninvited sexual remarks and were reported as coming from strangers in the street. These comments left women feeling uncomfortable at best, and unsafe at worst.
- 2.5 Most women who experienced this referenced inappropriate comments as part of a pattern of behaviours rather than as one-off events out of the blue. For example, saying that similar events have happened multiple times before, or that they are giving just one example from many similar comments that they have received.

“Through town at night there is multiple times I and friends have been called and shouted at from older men.”

Aged 16 to 19, Harassment/Catcalling

- 2.6 The other behaviour perpetrated by strangers commonly reported by respondents was sexual assault. Respondents reported being groped, kissed against their will or just referenced 'sexual assault' in their testimonials. These experiences typically related to parties, bars or nightclubs, but the assault did not always take place within a public venue. Several respondents recounted assaults occurring on the way home from an event or outside of the main space, for example in a corridor while waiting for a bathroom. These sexual assaults were frequently reported to have happened when respondents were underage (16 years old for example), although they were present in testimonials across all age groups. Respondents commonly recounted how the perpetrators were able to walk away from the situation anonymously and resume their day or night, while the women were left feeling hurt, disrespected, and violated.

“I had no idea who it was or what was happening as I was facing the bar and he came from behind. I turned around and shouted ‘what the f’ angrily. He laughed and walked away. I felt violated and disrespected.”

Aged 25 to 34, Harassment / Groping

Experience of VAWG in the workplace

- 2.7 As mentioned above women also experienced receiving uninvited sexual remarks from colleagues at work. In instances where these comments happened at work, women talked about feeling uncomfortable around the perpetrators but unable to speak out due to the culture of acceptance around sexual misconduct in their work environment.

“Whilst working in a [place of work] I worked with a male [senior colleague] who was notoriously known for his conduct towards female colleagues. It became so normal that no one felt they could ‘rock the boat’ and speak up and challenge the behaviours. The most poignant experience I recall clearly is going to find him to ask him a question in relation to [a work query]. As I approached him in the department corridor (there was no one else around) I started by asking if I could check something with him. He said “Oh I thought you were going to ask me to f you in the cupboard” - apologies for the language, but these were his exact words. At the time I was so taken aback that I just turned and walked away. I have since learned that other female colleagues have been in similar situations. I was left fearful of being alone in a room with him. It also made me question his conduct as [a professional role] if this was how he felt it ok to treat colleagues.”*

Age 35 to 44, Inappropriate comments at work

“I’ve experienced comments for jobs such as ‘I wouldn’t normally employ a female ... especially an attractive one like you’.”

Aged 35 to 44, Discrimination at work

Experiences of VAWG within the bounds of intimate relationships

Across the testimonials that referenced VAWG within an intimate relationship, most of these respondents mentioned that their male partners exerted coercive control or financial control over them. These respondents mentioned for example, being isolated from their friends and family, being under financial control of their partner and being made to feel that they were constantly in the wrong.

- 2.8 The other area of VAWG repeatedly reported within the bounds of relationships, and often where there was already coercive or financial control, was physical violence. The nature of the physical violence reported included women being ‘regularly hit’ by their partners, suffering broken noses, broken ribs or collarbones, and non-fatal strangulation.
- 2.9 VAWG within intimate relationships, was reported across all age groups but always retrospectively. In several instances, women were looking back on events that had happened to them as younger adults or teenagers when they had been in relationships with older men. Commonly, they talked about not realising the extent of the control or abuse until their

relationships had ended and they themselves attended counselling or spoke with others at services like Jersey Women's Refuge.

"During the 10 years I didn't realise all of what was happening. It happens subtly and gradually around you and is never quite so bad to leave [the relationship]."

Aged 55 to 64, Emotional and Financial abuse

"I believed my partner to have mental health problems as it was a slow progression and didn't once put it down to abuse!"

Aged 35 to 44, Manipulation and gaslighting

Experiences of VAWG from ex-partners after intimate relationships had ended

2.10 For some women, the experiences of VAWG continued after their relationships were over, in the form of stalking or harassment from their now ex-partners. This was frequently reported as something that happened to women after relationships that they had had when they were younger (ie. younger than 20 years old). Often, women now recognised that the initial relationships had been controlling or abusive, though they had not been aware of this at the time.

2.11 Stalking behaviours reported by respondents include frequent calls and messages to their mobile phones and landlines, showing up at women's homes or places of work and watching them from outside or trying to interact with them through methods such as throwing rocks at windows. In some cases, perpetrators behaviours escalated to damaging their cars or breaking into their homes.

"I had a stalker who'd message me saying he knew where I lived (including the house name), he was outside my window, he messaged me saying what I was wearing that day when out with friends. I felt scared and like I was always being watched. "

Aged 25-35, Stalking and harassment



Phoebe, aged 25 experienced repeated harassment while she walked home from work late at night

Phoebe's experience: Phoebe worked in a bar, 15-minutes walk from her house. On Friday and Saturday nights, she would finish work at around 2am and walk home through the centre of town. Every time she made this walk, men on the street would call out lewd or sexual comments about her appearance or what they would like to do with her. On one occasion, a man followed her most of the way home. She never responded or gave any indication that she would like to interact with these men.

Subsequent actions: Phoebe considered how she might report this, but the men that perpetrated this harassment were strangers so she could not identify them and did not know how she would go about reporting. From speaking with other female friends, she assumed that even if she were to tell the police, they would not be able to do anything to help.

"I never contacted the police because there is absolutely no point - the States of Jersey Police and courts in Jersey have shown time and time again that they do not care about sexual assault or violence against women."

The impact: Though Phoebe was not physically harmed by these experiences, she felt unsafe, intimidated and worried that one night these calls would escalate into a physical assault. She always texted her other colleagues when she got home safely and did not go to sleep until she had confirmation that the other women she worked with had also got home safely.

Addressing VAWG: Phoebe feels that education is the key to tackling VAWG in Jersey. She thinks that this should start in schools so that children are brought up learning about the boundaries of consent and respect for women and girls. She also feels that this education should take place in workplaces so men of all ages can be reached. She hopes that by making this education mandatory and more widespread, it will be possible to slowly change the mindset of the population and the harassment she experiences weekly will stop.

"Boys should be taught in primary school that girls rights to themselves and their bodies matter, and that no means no. They are not objects for sexual gratification. They should be treated with respect as individuals with feelings."

Where is VAWG happening?

2.12 Across the testimonials, VAWG was mentioned in four main locations; night-time economy venues, places of work or school, and in the home.

Night-time economy venues

2.13 A common theme among respondents relaying incidents which happened in pubs, bars and clubs, is that women felt VAWG was an expected side-effect of their presence there. Respondents explained that they attended these places to enjoy themselves but consistently felt unsafe. They reported taking measures to try to protect themselves and feeling that they need to be consistently on the lookout. Regardless of these measures, there was a sense from respondents that they felt that VAWG was essentially inevitable; it is not possible for them to guarantee they will be safe in these venues so they attend with the acknowledgement that some form of VAWG is likely.

“It was almost like it was part of life and that it was expected to happen and that it was a compliment to women if it happened.”

Aged 35 to 44, Groping, harassment and discrimination

“I always knew it was possible and there was a high chance of being assaulted, and in a horrible way I feel lucky that worse has not happened to me. I always took steps to protect myself, however sometimes it just doesn't work.”

Aged 25 to 34, Sexual assault

2.14 Many respondents who relayed experiences relating to the night-time economy, referenced the lack of accountability for perpetrators of sexual assault in these environments. They felt that the anonymity provided by a busy dancefloor or bar meant that the perpetrators were able to walk away from an assault without repercussions or the victim-survivors even knowing who they were. This left the victim-survivors feeling unable to report the assault or follow-up in any way.



VAWG in pubs, bars and clubs:

- Inappropriate comments
- Groping
- Drink spiking

Perpetrated by strangers, unidentifiable in the dark or in crowded spaces.

Private house parties

2.15 The types of VAWG reported by respondents at private house parties was largely similar in nature to that experienced in night-time economy venues in that groping was a common theme. A main difference being that the house parties afforded more privacy, meaning groping more frequently escalated into sexual assault or rape. The other key difference was that private house parties were far less anonymous, and perpetrators were commonly friends/family of friends or acquaintances. Knowing the identity of the perpetrator meant that victim-survivors could often have taken steps to report these experiences, but respondents often felt that this

would have risked damaging their friendship with the mutual friend or connection. This is discussed further in the *'Barriers to reporting'* section below.



VAWG at parties:

- Groping
- Sexual assault
- Rape

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Perpetrated by friends of friends/family so reporting VAWG risks damaging existing relationships

Work and school

2.16 Respondents also referred to VAWG in schools and workplaces, locations that women and girls have to be in daily. VAWG described in these locations was reported as widespread, well acknowledged and largely unchallenged.

2.17 Examples of VAWG behaviour reported by respondents to have occurred in schools included up-skirting and unwanted sexual touching. As with experiences of VAWG in the workplace, respondents reported that VAWG at schools was perpetrated by their peers. This meant that victim-survivors were frequently faced with their perpetrators in corridors and classrooms leaving them feeling uncomfortable and unable to be themselves in school.



VAWG at work/school:

- Inappropriate comments
- Up-skirting
- Culture of accepting harassment and 'not rocking the boat'.

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Often coming from more peers or those in a position of power

In the home

2.18 VAWG happening in private was typically within the bounds of intimate or family relationships. Generally, this included domestic abuse, coercive and/or financial control. The private nature of VAWG happening at home meant that these were often examples where the victims were unaware that they were in abusive situations at the time, in part because no one else was witnessing the behaviours they were experiencing. These women also talked about a concern that they would not be believed if they were to report, again due in part to the behind-closed-doors nature of their experience. Indeed, the only mention of the police being involved at the time of the VAWG incident (rather than retrospectively) was when this privacy was compromised, for instance when neighbours heard a disturbance and called the police.



VAWG in the home:

- Coercive/financial control
- Emotional abuse
- Physical assault
- Rape

Perpetrated by a male partner or family member

Outside in public

2.19 VAWG experienced while women were travelling to and from locations was generally experienced on the street and consisted of catcalling or being followed.

2.20 These experiences were generally discussed as a normal part of life for women in Jersey and something that happens regularly when women walk alone at night or even during daylight hours. Women reported being uncomfortable and adjusting their schedules to avoid walking alone through areas where they knew this would occur.

VAWG outside in public:

- Inappropriate comments
- Catcalling
- Following women home

Perpetrated by male strangers, alone or in groups.



Susan, aged 52 experienced stalking and harassment from her ex-husband

Susan's experience: Susan divorced her husband when she was 48 and for the year following this, she received a constant torrent of abusive and sometimes threatening messages and calls from him. He would also arrive unexpectedly at her house or workplace and would stand outside or try to enter. On one occasion, he forced entry to Susan's garden and put a brick through her shed window.

"After we broke up, he started to harass me, sending me vile messages on text, email, and all social media platforms. As fast as I was blocking him on something he was finding another route to contact me."

Subsequent actions: Susan reported this to the police several times, but they were reluctant to intervene and told her there was not a lot they could do. In one instance, they went round to speak with her ex-husband and assured Susan that he would be ceasing his contact with her. Unfortunately, this had little effect and the harassment continued the following week. After this had been going on for around a year, her ex-husband entered the mental health services and the harassment reduced a lot. She has since contacted Jersey Women's Refuge and is grateful for the support they have been able to provide.

The impact: The period of harassment was a highly distressing time for Susan. She was unable to sleep properly or concentrate at work as she was worried about what he would do or say next. Her experience of trying to get help from the police has badly damaged her trust in the justice system in Jersey – she was made to feel that the harassment and stalking she experienced was not a big deal and not worth the police spending time on. Going forward, she would be very unlikely to report any future harassment to the police as she would assume they would be unable to help.

"Most importantly to say is that I feel completely let down by the justice system that is in place to protect us... The first officer I saw, despite providing many, many pages of evidence and bringing my phone into the station to be screened, never actually went to see my ex-partner, and nothing was done about the abuse I was receiving from him."

Addressing VAWG: Susan would like to see the Government of Jersey putting more funding into support services for women experiencing stalking and harassment. Personally, she found Jersey Women's Refuge to be a great support, but was aware that some of her female friends had been waiting a long time to try to get counselling or support with their own VAWG experiences. She felt that it is vital women and girls are able to access support as soon as they reach out for it, in order to best help them to cope with their experiences.

What happens next for victims?

Experiences of reporting VAWG

- 2.21 A common theme among respondents who did report their experiences of all types of VAWG was that nothing was done. This was the case for testimonials from victim-survivors who reported their experiences at the time and those who reported their experiences retrospectively, but the perceived causes of the lack of action differed depending on when they reported the VAWG incident.
- 2.22 Respondents who reported VAWG retrospectively, for example an assault that occurred several years ago, recalled being advised by the police that, though their case could go to court, it was likely nothing would be done. This was understood to mean that the justice system did not have the means to action retrospective reports of VAWG and hence there was no point in reporting.
- 2.23 Most respondents who discussed childhood experiences of VAWG, for example a rape at the age of 13, an abusive partner at the age of 14, or a stalker at the age of 16, mentioned reporting the experience to either the police or to their schools. However, these younger victim-survivors, felt that their voices did not stand up against denial from an older, or more influential, perpetrator.

“I also reported when I was raped as an underage teen (13). The guy got off as it was my word against his, even though I was a child and he was an adult. He did not end up on the sex(offenders) register.”

Aged 35 to 44, Child abuse, rape.

- 2.24 Where victim-survivors reported these experiences to their schools, they felt that they were not taken seriously or were not believed. Repeatedly respondents referred to the police or their schools as ‘brushing off’ their reports or implying that they were not telling the truth.

“I remember telling the school I wasn’t allowed to wash as my boyfriend wouldn’t allow it. They brushed it off and I was never spoken to about this, they just put me in a room to ‘calm down’.”

Aged 20 to 24, Assault and domestic abuse

- 2.25 Respondents who reported their experience of VAWG, generally felt that police only did the bare minimum required in response to their concerns. For example, leaving a voicemail or visiting the perpetrator of relentless harassment and giving victim-survivors empty assurances that harassment would stop without taking any preventative action.

“When I contacted the police they finally went to see him, and told me he said he wouldn’t do anything again. About two weeks after, he threw a paving block through the windscreen of my car.”

Aged 16 to 19, Harassment and stalking.

- 2.26 For other victim-survivors, the process for the court system to action their case once reported moved too slowly to effectively protect them or bring the perpetrator to justice while the VAWG behaviour was taking place. The length of time taken for the courts to process their case also caused prolonged stress. In one instance a respondent reported that, from retrospectively

reporting an instance of coercive control and domestic abuse, the justice system took such a long time to process the case that they were only just submitting evidence several years later.

- 2.27 These negative experiences of reporting VAWG in Jersey left women feeling let down by the authorities and as though their experiences did not matter or that they were not as important as the perpetrators of their abuse. Further, these experiences of reporting have served as a deterrent against reporting future experiences of VAWG for both them and their peers.

“I felt the whole time that they were protecting him and not me, who was the actual victim in the situation.”

Aged 16 to 19, Harassment and stalking

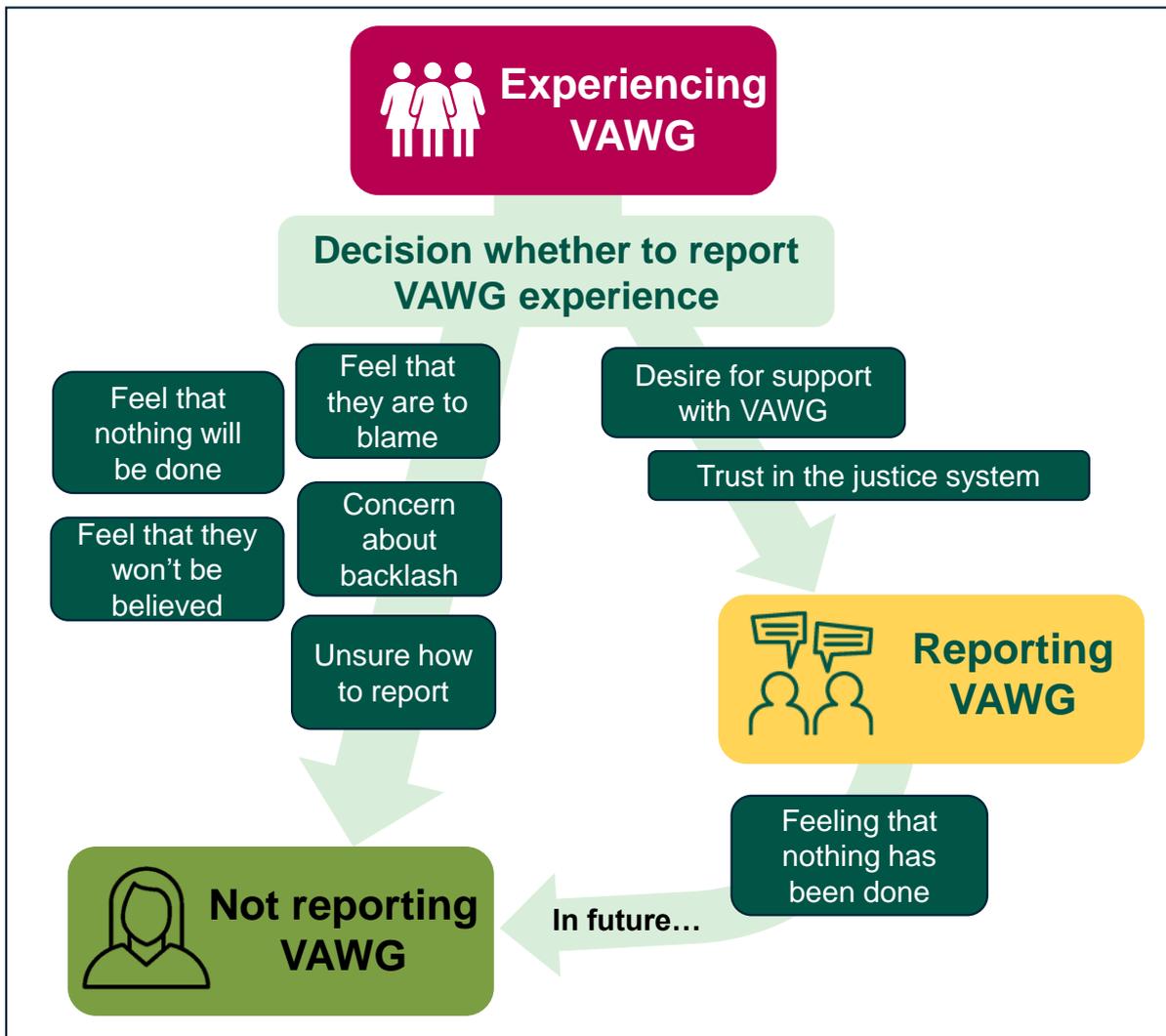
“As a child, this taught me that I was not protected, and the police would not be able to help if something did happen. Since then, I have experienced multiple counts of assault and rape and have had no faith that I would be supported and have had this repeatedly proven to me.”

Aged 25 to 34, Attempted assault

Barriers to reporting VAWG

- 2.28 There were several key barriers to reporting which are shown in Fig 2.1 and discussed in this section but the feeling that nothing would be done was an over-riding theme across the testimonials and seemed to be the biggest barrier to respondents reporting VAWG.

Figure 2.1 The barriers discouraging women from reporting their experiences of VAWG.



2.29 Respondents were commonly aware from their female friends and family of numerous instances where VAWG incidents had been reported and no action had been taken.

2.30 In addition to a lack of action, there were concerns about a negative reaction or backlash to reporting VAWG. Respondents did not elaborate on what they meant by a 'backlash' but they frequently discussed a 'stigma' around reporting VAWG and, in some instances, feelings of embarrassment and shame around what had happened. These concerns around a stigma were present for both victim-survivors of VAWG historically (more than 10 years ago) and VAWG that had occurred recently (in the past 2 years) and gave the impression that women and girls of all ages shared these concerns.

"I thought people would judge me, say it was stupid and to just get over it, along with causing heartache for their [the perpetrator] family when it was minor."

Age 25 to 34, Sexual assault, stalking

"Most of them like my daughter do not want to come forward, because they know it's likely the boy won't be charged, and they (the girls) will be left with the stigma."

Age 35 to 54, Violent sexual assault

- 2.31 Specifically, respondents referring to sexual harassment in the workplace also discussed concerns around the potential negative impact that challenging inappropriate behaviours could have had on the victim-survivors career. Additionally, in instances of respondents experiencing VAWG perpetrated by high profile people in Jersey, their concerns around a backlash of reporting were heightened by the possibility of local media attention.
- 2.32 Some barriers were specific to situations surrounding VAWG behaviours. For example, respondents experiencing VAWG within relationships often did not report it at the time because they did not understand that the situations that they were in were abusive.

“I didn’t not recognise it because I didn’t understand the dynamic at the time. The Jersey Women’s Refuge helped me to understand it as emotional and psychological abuse.”

Aged 45 to 54, Controlling and coercive behaviour

- 2.33 For some respondents, this went further in that they believed that they were to blame for the VAWG behaviour they experienced and so could not report it. This occurred for VAWG behaviour within intimate relationships as a result of gaslighting (a form of manipulation that makes somebody question their own version of reality, often carried out in the context of an unequal power balance in a relationship) or manipulation. It also applied for other forms of VAWG, where victim-survivors felt that, because they had been drinking or catching a lift with a man, they were responsible for assaults they endured.

“I told friends about it at the time, but because I was drunk and had hitched a lift, I felt it was my fault. I didn’t report it.”

Aged 45 to 54, Sexual assault

“I felt due to his manipulation and gaslighting that I was the problem and my behaviour if exposed was a big issue that no one would tolerate!”

Aged 35 to 44, Domestic abuse and manipulation

- 2.34 For several respondents, there was also a sense of guilt around reporting VAWG in that it may upset people or have severe implications for the lives of the perpetrator and their family. This was particularly highlighted in cases where perpetrators were boys or young men and the victims felt that their behaviours came from a lack of understanding rather than a desire to harm.

“I didn’t report it because I didn’t want to destroy a family”.

Aged 25 to 34, Sexual assault.

- 2.35 This was also a factor for respondents considering reporting VAWG in their place of work. As discussed earlier, there was a feeling in these situations that sexual harassment had become such a normal part of the culture, that to draw attention to it would cause unnecessary upset.
- 2.36 A small number of respondents raised their concerns that some women were not sure how to report their experiences of VAWG. Particularly victim-survivors who were young at the time of

their experience. They felt they were not well informed on what they could do, who to talk to or how to press charges.

Experiences of reporting to friends or family

2.37 Where respondents spoke about their experiences to peers (friends or family), the responses were mixed.

2.38 Overwhelmingly, the reactions of female peers indicated to respondents of all ages that they were not alone in their experiences; and that many other females had similar stories. For these respondents, these conversations reinforced the belief that VAWG is widespread and common. Many of their peers had been through the same experiences that they had, and many had either not reported it or had done so and faced a backlash.

“I am not the only one. I know of many other girls/women that have been assaulted or raped. It is all too common”.

Aged 35 to 44, Child abuse / rape.

“I told a couple of (female) friends and they brushed it off saying it happens to everyone but it shouldn't be that way.”

Aged 25 to 34, Harassment and sexual assault.

2.39 Conversely, respondents who talked about sharing their experiences with male audiences or with 'friends and family' (gender unspecified) talked about not being believed or not being supported. Women who experienced these reactions from their peers, commonly did not report their experiences of VAWG to the authorities for many years, if at all.

2.40 There was also a noticeable overlap between these respondents (not believed or supported by peers) and respondents who felt (at the time) that the VAWG behaviour they experienced had been their fault. For example, if they had taken a lift home with a stranger or had taken a taxi alone drunk.



Kara, was sexually assaulted at a friend's birthday party, aged 32.

The incident: Kara was at her friend Laura's house for a birthday party. It was later in the evening and all the guests had been drinking for several hours when she was on her way to the bathroom and she passed a male cousin of Laura's in the hallway. He pinned her against the wall and was beginning to push a hand up her dress when they were interrupted by another friend entering the hallway. Kara took this opportunity to run into the bathroom and lock the door.

Subsequent actions: Kara did not mention this event to Laura at the party as she did not want to ruin her friend's birthday. She talked about it with other friends later who suggested that she should report it to the police. Kara was worried that this would damage her friendship with Laura and decided to keep what had happened to herself.

"I didn't make a fuss about it at the party as it was a friend's birthday and I didn't want to upset the host and hostess."

The impact: Kara was very emotionally distressed at the time and left the party immediately. Since the event, Kara has been nervous to go to parties or events alone. She would not attend if she thought that the man who assaulted her would be there and worried constantly about bumping into him on the street. She now feels that she should have reported the assault because she is concerned that he will do the same again to someone else.

"Now though, I regret it because if he had it in him then he is capable of doing the same/more to someone else so having it on record would have been the best case."

Addressing VAWG: Kara feels that to address VAWG in Jersey, women need to feel safe to report their experiences. She would like to see police implement a secure and anonymous channel for reporting VAWG. For this to be effective, she also thinks it would be good for women and girls in Jersey to be given much more information about what is likely to happen if they report their experiences and what kind of support will be available.

3 The impact of experiencing VAWG on the lives of women and girls in Jersey

3.1 This chapter will explore the responses to the question ‘How has your experience(s) of violence against women and girls impacted on your life?’ It will begin by looking at the actions those providing testimonials had taken in response to their experiences and will explore the effects on their mental health and their personal lives.

Response to experience

Accessing services

3.2 In response to the VAWG that they had experienced, some respondents accessed support services in Jersey. It is not clear from the testimonials where respondent’s knowledge of these support services came from.

3.3 Jersey Women’s Refuge was the most commonly mentioned service that was accessed. Specifically, respondents talked about Jersey Women’s Refuge helping them to understand their situations better and move forward in a positive way. Respondents also talked about organisations such as Victims First, JAAR (Jersey Action Against Rape) and Dewberry House SARC (sexual assault referral centre).

3.4 There were several instances where support accessed from services other than the Jersey Women’s Refuge had not met their needs. In one instance, a VAWG experience of a girl aged 16 years old highlighted a gap in support services for younger victims of rape. The victim in this situation was too young to be supported by some of the mainstream services and ended up being referred through a chain of different organisations to a counsellor who did not have specialised experience of sexual assault cases. Other respondents mentioned waiting up to nine-months for support and then receiving only sporadic support after that. For example, having an initially positive interaction with a support service, but then the only support after the first meeting being an occasional phone call.

3.5 The most effective support discussed by respondents, was obtained by paying privately for regular meetings with a counsellor with experience working with victims of sexual violence. Women highlighted in their testimonials their concern that they had to source and fund this themselves, something they felt that other women in their position would not necessarily be capable of.

Mental health impact

3.6 Many respondents reported that their experiences of VAWG had long lasting effects on their mental wellbeing.

3.7 While women’s experiences of VAWG were all discussed in the past tense, often explaining events that had occurred several years ago, comments relating to the impact on their mental health were consistently reported in the present tense. Respondents frequently talked about women experiencing depression, anxiety, panic attacks and PTSD as part of their lives now, regardless of how long ago they experienced VAWG.

“Those 3 years of my childhood continuously affect me growing up and into adulthood. I continue to suffer with depression and anxiety. I continue to go to therapy weekly as my self-esteem and anxiety were badly damaged.”

Aged 20 to 24, Domestic abuse and coercive control

- 3.8 These mental health impacts were particularly common within respondents reporting domestic abuse, coercive control, stalking, and sexual assaults (including rape), compared to respondents discussing other VAWG experiences such as catcalling or sexual harassment at work.

Personal impact

Low self-esteem and trust

- 3.9 There was also an impact on victim-survivors ability to form healthy relationships. Several respondents described how they felt that their experiences of VAWG had led to low self-esteem or self-worth. This was particularly common in those experiences where VAWG was perpetrated within a intimate relationship.
- 3.10 Some respondents who described historic VAWG, talked about how they had been able to overcome these difficulties through counselling or family support. However, others explained that their experiences of VAWG had permanently impacted their ability to have healthy relationships because they were left unable to trust men.

“I have problems with intimate relationships, as the abuse has continued through them and I have been left thinking I deserve this somehow, that it must be my fault because everyone says it is.”

Aged 35 to 44, Child abuse / rape

Feeling unsafe living in Jersey

- 3.11 Aside from impacting how women felt about themselves and their relationships, their experiences of VAWG also impacted how safe women felt more broadly living their lives in Jersey.
- 3.12 Many respondents talked about being afraid to walk alone and afraid to be left alone with, either specific men, or men in general.

“I am scared to walk alone at any time of day.”

Aged 16 to 19, Up-skirting and groping

“I wouldn't feel comfortable walking alone at night or even when the sun begins to set.”

Aged 16 to 19, Harassment and inappropriate comments

- 3.13 For some women, this fear extended into their own homes, even if they were now safe. Respondents talked about constantly checking doors and windows were locked, car doors were locked, and always checking behind them. They talked about feeling scared all the time.

3.14 In addition to this, where women had had a bad experience of reporting VAWG to the authorities (as discussed earlier), they also had a fear that if something was to happen to them again, they would be unprotected by the authorities.

“As a child, this taught me that I was not protected, and the police would not be able to help if something did happen.”

Aged 25 to 34, Attempted assault

“It still feels like government and authorities want to sweep our experiences under the rug and ignore it.”

Aged 35 to 44, Child abuse / rape



Rebecca, suffered physical and emotional abuse from her partner between ages of 17 and 19.

The incident: Between the ages of 17 and 19, Rebecca was in a relationship and living with a man several years older than her. In this relationship, he was very controlling, not allowing Rebecca to speak to her friends or family and also restricting her finances. Several times while they were at home together, arguments would escalate to physical violence with Rebecca suffering broken ribs and numerous bruises. This left Rebecca too afraid to speak out about what was happening in case he would react badly and hurt her.

“The controlling behaviour was ongoing. Once I had been violently abused, I was scared to do anything to upset him”.

Subsequent actions: On one occasion, the police were called to their house by the neighbours who had heard a disturbance. At this time, Rebecca was too afraid of her partners reaction to speak out, and sent the police away without reporting the violence. There was no attempt at follow up from the police. In time, the relationship ended and Rebecca felt safe to report her experiences. However, she also felt that if she were to report the abuse retrospectively, she would not be believed as the bruises had faded and her injuries had healed. In the end, she decided not to report her experiences.

The impact: Since the event, Rebecca has been diagnosed by her doctor as suffering from PTSD and is on medication to control her panic attacks. She still feels unsafe in her home and finds her panic attacks are triggered by very small things such as a phone call with no caller ID or a loud noise at night.

“I used to check doors and windows were locked constantly, I always had a fear he was going to appear, I was always looking behind me in case he was around. I never felt safe. You end up a nervous wreck, with depression and no self-confidence.”

Addressing VAWG: Rebecca believes there should be a greater emphasis on education in schools; for example, discussion with pupils about what a healthy relationship looks like and how to spot signs of coercive control in relationships. She believes part of this improved education would be teaching young people about the support services available if they find themselves in these situations. The effect of this would be that young people would be better able to identify the warning signs, identify them earlier, and seek help if they found themselves in a relationship like hers.

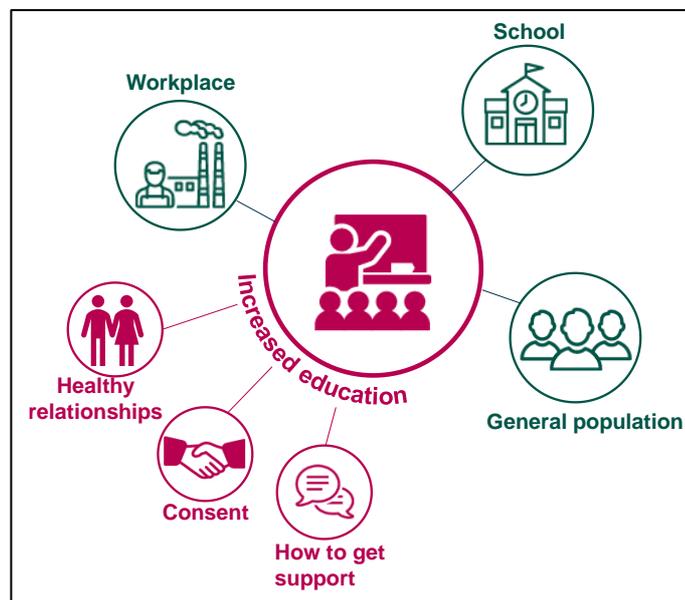
4 Victim-survivors views on what should be done to address violence against women and girls in Jersey

4.1 This chapter will cover responses to the question “What would you like to see done to address violence against women and girls in Jersey?”. Suggestions are grouped into actions around education, support services and the justice system.

Education

4.2 The suggested areas where education could work to impact VAWG in Jersey are summarised in **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

Figure 4.1 Suggested areas where education could work to improve VAWG in Jersey.



4.3 Overwhelmingly, the most common suggestions to address VAWG in Jersey centred around education in schools and workplaces. Respondents suggested education in both settings would include learnings around the boundaries of consent and the characteristics of a healthy relationship. This would include skills around emotional intelligence and self-awareness as well as red-flags to look out for, such as manipulation, narcissism, and gaslighting.

“I wish as a teenager I had had lessons/discussions about relationships and boundaries and red flags.”

Aged 55 to 64, Coercive control and financial abuse.

4.4 The aim of this would be to ensure young people grow up understanding what VAWG is and how to recognise it, making them better able to support themselves and each other. Respondents felt that learnings around the boundaries of consent would aim to make men of all ages aware and careful of how their behaviours are perceived by female partners, with the hope that both parties would be better able to navigate a sexual relationship comfortably and respectfully.

- 4.5 In schools, it was suggested that this education might be more effective if it came from a younger relatable figure rather than from teachers themselves. The Decider Skills programme (a cognitive behaviour therapy-based programme designed to equip children with strategies to cope with challenging situations) which is currently run by Mind in Jersey was given as an example of the sort of support that would be most beneficial if it was delivered as standard practice in schools.

“I feel certainly from my time in school not enough was done to bring awareness, and I think if possible it should be a younger person talking about it so that it is more relatable to young students.”

Aged 16 to 19, Manipulation and harassment.

- 4.6 It was also suggested that this education should extend to teachers within schools, to enable them to spot signs of domestic abuse in their pupils and hence better support students who might be suffering at home. In the UK for example, the Department for Education implemented new Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance ² for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams and teachers in 2020. This has made relationships, sex and health education mandatory in secondary schools and relationships and health education mandatory in primary schools. The effectiveness of these guidelines is currently under review.
- 4.7 Many respondents stressed that education for both staff and school students should include information about the types of support that are available to women and girls if they do experience VAWG. Respondents felt that there was a lack of understanding, particularly among young girls, around who they could go to for help and what that help would look like, which hopefully this education would address. Respondents suggested that this could be particularly useful if support services could be highlighted pre-emptively to young people who schools know have had a difficult upbringing or experienced violence previously, to help them manage issues that could later affect their relationships.
- 4.8 Overall, respondents talked about using the education of men and boys of all ages to bring about a ‘change of mindset’ to the entire population, that would remove the stigma and backlash that women and girls fear when they consider reporting VAWG.

Support services

- 4.9 Respondents’ ideas for improvements to support services are summarised below in Figure 4.2.

² 2020 Department for Education RSHE Guidance - [Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/86422/rshe-guidance-2020.pdf)

Figure 4.2 Suggested areas where support services could work to improve VAWG in Jersey



- 4.10 Though respondents acknowledged that there are support services operating in Jersey, they emphasised that these services need to be non-judgemental, more accessible and immediately available when needed.
- 4.11 For example, they felt that support should be immediately available when women reach out for it or automatically as soon as a VAWG incident involves the police. Currently, respondents reported having to wait months between referral to a support service and beginning to access counselling, during which time they felt women lost the motivation to engage with support. Respondents suggested that by having support available immediately, the support would be more effective and women would be more likely to engage.
- 4.12 The nature of the support desired included advice around what will happen next, what their options are, and counselling to reduce the mental health impact of described in Chapter 3. Specifically, where events have involved police, this support should include a person to stay with the victim-survivor while they were reporting and provide non-judgemental emotional support.

“Reporting incidents is essential to help prevent it happening to others. I feel this is hard until people feel listened to, like action will be taken and that they won’t get verbally abused for doing so.”

Aged 16 to 19, Manipulation and harassment.

- 4.13 Respondents also suggested that if women and girls felt that there would be a high quality, non-judgemental support service available to them on reporting, they would be more likely to report their experiences of VAWG.

Justice system

- 4.14 There was a range of opinions among respondents on how the justice system (States of Jersey Police and Jersey courts system) could act to counter VAWG in Jersey. This included pushing for harsher penalties for perpetrators of VAWG, developing channels for softer justice (for

example, opportunities for disciplinary action outside of the criminal justice system), creating a secure system for VAWG to be reported and improving the legislation around VAWG.

4.15 Respondents’ suggestions for how the justice system could act to reduce or address VAWG in Jersey are summarised in Figure 4.3 and then discussed in more detail below.

Figure 4.3 Suggested areas where the criminal justice system could work to improve VAWG in Jersey



Push for harsher penalties for perpetrators of VAWG

4.16 In some instances, respondents suggested that the criminal justice system should come down harder on perpetrators of VAWG. This included pushing for more convictions and harsher penalties in VAWG cases, placing the onus on defendants to prove that there was consent during rape allegations and allocating harsher punishments once convictions are made. It was suggested that these harsher penalties would act as a deterrent against men committing acts of VAWG.

Develop channels for soft justice

4.17 Alternatively, some respondents suggested that more ‘soft justice’ channels for victims to report lower level incidents of VAWG and address them with the perpetrator would be useful. For instance, they felt this could be applicable, where VAWG was perpetrated by friends of friends, or a by young person, and the victim does not want their reporting of VAWG to impact the perpetrators career or relationships. They felt this could take the form of a mediated conversation between the victim and perpetrator, in which the victim could explain to the perpetrator the effect of the behaviour they experienced in the hope that the perpetrator would learn from the experience and not repeat the behaviour. It was suggested that an additional benefit of this would be helping to avoid criminalising young people over genuine mistakes.

A secure system for reporting VAWG

4.18 It was also suggested that, in the small community of Jersey, it would be beneficial if there could be a more secure means of reporting VAWG that would guarantee anonymity and protection for the victims. This was also felt to be relevant in relation to victims of domestic violence, for whom

it was suggested this protection could include not having to face their abuser in court over other matters like child custody.

Improved legislation

4.19 Respondents also drew attention to legislative changes that have occurred recently in the UK and Jersey. For example, 'Clare's Law' which now allows victims or potential victims of domestic abuse to find out about their partner's criminal history if they have reason to believe that they are at risk of suffering domestic abuse. Respondents also pointed to new legislation in the UK which now makes domestic abuse punishable by up to five years in prison. Respondents suggested that current legislation around VAWG behaviours is still too vague around which VAWG behaviours are criminal offences. This means that it is difficult for women to identify and hence prove whether the VAWG behaviours they had experienced could be taken to court. They suggested that by developing clearer criteria of what constitutes VAWG and allowing the different behaviours to be defined in court cases, more women would be able to bring their experiences to court and see justice served.

"In my case a lot of the time I was told what was happening with the abuse I was receiving from my ex-partner did not fit the criteria or wouldn't stand up enough in court, whilst at the same time I was told that the laws were vague. There needs to be an even clearer set of criteria, and taking into account many more types of harassment"

Aged 16 to 19, Manipulation and harassment

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The final chapter will summarise the main findings in relation to the three key objectives as well as summarising the prevention methods that respondents suggested.

The prevalence, frequency, patterns, and consequences of violence against women and girls

- 5.2 It was felt by women and girls that VAWG was widespread and part of everyday life in Jersey.
- 5.3 Women experienced many forms of VAWG from catcalling and harassment to physical violence, coercive control and sexual assault. When they shared their experiences with female friends, family and strangers, they learnt that their stories were not unique and that many other women and girls had had similar experiences.
- 5.4 Particularly in venues linked to the night-time economy, women reported that they would attend with the expectation that they would be likely to receive unwanted sexual comments, unwanted sexual touching and potentially be a victim of drink spiking.
- 5.5 Respondents who talked about VAWG in intimate relationships experienced domestic abuse ranging from coercive/financial control to emotional abuse and, in some cases, physical violence.
- 5.6 Respondent's experiences of VAWG in Jersey have left women feeling unsafe to walk alone outside, uncomfortable in their places of work or school and nervous in their own homes.
- 5.7 The impact of their experiences on the mental health and personal lives of the victims was considerable and long-lasting. Many women reported still experiencing low self-esteem, PTSD, anxiety and depression several years on, and some reported that they struggled to form healthy relationships as a result of their experiences.

Barriers preventing individuals reporting violence against women and girls.

- 5.8 Reporting VAWG was quite unusual among respondents due to a number of barriers deterring women and girls from reporting their experiences. These included knowledge, expected backlash and stigma, and the belief that nothing would be done if they did report their experiences.
- 5.9 Barriers around knowledge included a lack of understanding of how to report VAWG, victims feeling that they were to blame for what had happened, and in some cases victims not understanding that their experiences constituted VAWG. Respondents felt these barriers could be addressed through a push for more education in schools and workplaces. This education would cover boundaries and consent, how to spot signs of an abusive relationship and how to access support if VAWG is experienced.
- 5.10 Barriers around expected backlash from reporting, both on victims and, in some cases, on the perpetrator and their family were a concern. In the current culture that they perceived as generally accepting low level sexual harassment and discrimination as part of life, victims expressed concerns that to report their experience of VAWG would result in victim-blaming or that they would cause upset to a perpetrator who had acted through ignorance rather than malice. Suggestions to address concerns around backlash of reporting included:

- In instances where victims were worried about negative attention or backlash on them, it was suggested that an anonymous reporting channel would be most beneficial to mitigate this.
- Where victims were concerned about the effect of reporting on the perpetrator, for instance, a young perpetrator whose actions might stem from a lack of understanding, it was suggested that a channel for soft justice would be valuable. This could hopefully correct the behaviour and avoid a repeat offence without the need to push for a criminal conviction.

5.11 The belief that nothing would be done was overwhelmingly the main barrier preventing women and girls from reporting. This came, either from personal experience of reporting VAWG, or from hearing second hand about the negative experiences of others reporting VAWG. To address this the experience of reporting would need to be seen as safe and effective. It was suggested that this would encourage more women to report, even if other barriers still applied.

Victim-survivors experience of the criminal justice system and support services

5.12 It was relatively uncommon for respondents to discuss experiences of the criminal justice system, in part because often victim-survivors chose not to report their experience of sexual harassment or had been unable to take their cases forward.

5.13 Overall, the criminal justice system was perceived to be slow, and in some cases unable, to deliver justice to perpetrators of VAWG.

5.14 Regardless of interaction with the criminal justice system, several respondents who experienced physical violence or assault, domestic violence or emotional abuse, had since received counselling or further support from organisations like Jersey Woman's Refuge.

5.15 The most effective counselling was obtained by paying privately for a counsellor with experience working with victims of sexual violence. This highlighted a concern among respondents that a lot of other women and girls will not have the means to access this kind of support. Respondents suggested that the Government of Jersey could better support women and girls in Jersey by making this specialised support more accessible.

Preventing and mitigating the effect of violence against women and girls

5.16 The prevention strategies that respondents suggested revolved around education, support services and reforms to the justice system.

5.17 The most common suggestions to address VAWG in Jersey centred around education in schools and workplaces. Respondents suggested education in both settings should include learning around the boundaries of consent and the characteristics of a healthy relationship. It was hoped that a strong focus on education would bring about a 'change in mindset' among men and boys. They also felt women and girls should be made aware of their rights and the support services they could access if they needed to.

5.18 Respondents recognised that support services did exist but felt that they were not always suitable for their needs or available to them. Respondents emphasised the need for support services to be non-judgemental, more accessible and immediately available when needed.

- 5.19 Respondents' suggestions for the justice system varied from introducing harsher punishments for perpetrators and taking steps to making convictions more likely, to softer approaches such as facilitating mediation meetings for more minor offences or in instances when the perpetrator is young.
- 5.20 It was considered important that the channels for reporting VAWG are secure and anonymous. This is particularly relevant in Jersey as it has a small population and victim-survivors worry that they could be identified and face a backlash and stigma.

“

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Whether employer or employee, client or collaborator, we are all humans first and foremost. Recognising this essential humanity is central to how we conduct our business, and how we lead our lives. We respect and accommodate each individual's way of thinking, working and communicating, mindful of the fact that each has their own story and means of telling it.

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