

# ESRC SDAI Application - Understanding domestic abuse using Big Data

## 1 Objectives

*List the main objectives of the proposed research [up to 4000 chars]*

1) To conduct the first large-scale, quantitative exploration of the individual- and neighbourhood-level risk factors of domestic abuse victimisation. Rigorous validation of insights from existing, mostly quantitative investigations using an UK-wide dataset, providing a deeper understanding of the environments perpetuating domestic abuse. While we will only use UK data, these findings will likely to be relevant for researchers outside the UK.

2) To translate our research into impact by delivering applicable insights for the relevant agencies. Police (improving recording practices, understanding domestic abuse reporting demand characteristics over time for a better allocation of resources), government (temporal/geographical planning of targeted campaigns, intervention programmes), shelters (temporal/geographical allocation of resources), academia (publications)

## 2 Summary

*Describe the proposed research in simple terms in a way that could be publicised to a general audience [up to 4000 chars]*

*I'm really bad at this. I don't really understand what should go in here*

Who are the people most vulnerable to becoming victims of domestic abuse? To what extent do neighbourhood characteristics predict the prevalence of domestic abuse? How can we prevent serious harm and what affects victims' decision to finally report the abuse? What is the quantifiable, long-term impact of domestic abuse victimisation, or witnessing domestic abuse as a child on socio-economic outcomes in later life? How do changes in alcohol consumption and financial stability affect the prevalence of domestic abuse?

Addressing these questions are fundamental for a deeper understanding of the constellation of individual and environmental factors perpetuating domestic abuse, and the long-term consequences it can have on the lives of those affected. Designing effective policy interventions to protect victims can only be based on a sound understanding of the type of environments where domestic abuse is likely to occur. In this research programme, we combine various data sources to provide a comprehensive answer to these questions in the context of the UK.

Domestic abuse is increasingly recognised as a serious public health concern in many countries, including the UK. It is estimated that in the year ending 2018 March, 2 million adults in England and Wales (7.9% of women and 4.2% of men) have experienced some form of domestic abuse (Office for National Statistics, 2018). Escalation of domestic abuse can result in homicide, and the risk of lethal violence is especially high in the case of female victims: 41% of femicides, and 0.6% of homicides committed in the year ending 2018 March were domestic abuse-related in England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2019a). The long-lasting effect of domestic abuse are not limited to the direct target of abuse, as it can have severe developmental impacts on children witnessing the abuse. Taking into account the emotional and physical consequences of the abuse suffered, the economic cost of domestic abuse in England and Wales between April, 2016 and March, 2017 was estimated to be £66 billion (Oliver, Alexander, Roe, & Wlasny, 2019).

Despite the vast economic costs associated with it, there is relatively little academic research focusing on domestic abuse in the context of the UK. Studies using police-recorded domestic abuse data have limited ability to derive useful insights about this phenomenon due to the vast levels of underreporting. In contrast, studies using qualitative methods have limited ability to derive useful insights about this phenomenon.

In the UK, the most reliable source of data on domestic abuse is the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), an annual, cross-sectional representative victimisation survey across England and Wales, collecting data from 30,000–40,000 households every year (Office for National Statistics, 2019b). The survey has a self-completion module containing questions about the respondent's experiences of domestic abuse throughout their life (since the age of 16), and in the past 12 months in particular. While the Office for National Statistics (ONS) regularly publishes findings from the CSEW, these are mostly exploratory and descriptive in nature. In spite of the rich information provided by this survey, only a limited number of studies have utilised the CSEW (e.g., Khalifeh, Hargreaves, Howard, & Birdthistle, 2013) to understand domestic abuse.

By recognising its potential, we will rely on the CSEW and combine it with other external datasets to examine various aspects of domestic abuse in England and Wales, and provide a better understanding of this phenomenon. We will explore the individual- and environmental-level risk factors of domestic abuse, including the demographic and socio-economic predictors of victimisation, as well as the neighbourhood characteristics affecting it. Drawing on previous reports on police mis-recording of domestic abuse across England, we will explore whether this affects specific victim groups disproportionately, and its consequences regarding victim's trust in the Criminal Justice System. By combining the rich information in the CSEW with a police crime dataset provided by the West Midlands Police, we will explore the victim- and perpetrator-specific predictors of domestic abuse resulting in serious harm and the time-varying and time-invariant predictors of reporting the abuse. The CSEW will also allow us to estimate the causal effect of direct and indirect domestic abuse victimisation on socio-economic and health-related outcomes in adulthood and the likelihood of engaging in violent criminal behaviours in childhood. In addition, we will explore how time-varying external factors, such as changes in alcohol consumption and financial health affect the reported number of domestic abuse incidents. Our previous investigation has revealed that the reported number of alcohol-related domestic abuse increases by 61% following the victory of the England national football team, highlighting the profound effect external events can have on perpetrators' propensity to engage in violence.

para on implications

### **3 Academic Beneficiaries**

*Describe who will benefit from the research [up to 4000 chars].*

### **4 Staff Duties**

*Summarise the roles and responsibilities of each post for which funding is sought [up to 2000 characters]*

### **5 Impact Summary**

*(please refer to the help for guidance on what to consider when completing this section) [up to 4000 chars]*

### **6 Ethical Information**

*Please explain what, if any, ethical issues you believe are relevant to the proposed research project, and which ethical approvals have been obtained, or will be sought if the project is funded? If you believe that an ethics review is not necessary, please explain your view (available: 4000 characters)*

## **7 Attachments**

Instructions for attachments

- \* Case for support (6 page limit, 11 points, A4, 1" margins)
- \* References
- \* Pathways to Impact (2 sides of A4)
- \* Justification of Resources (2 sides of A4)
- \* Letter of support from WMP
- \* Data management plan (modify from lab plan)
- \* Accumulating to choose progress report
- \* NIBS2 progress report

## References

- Bland, M., & Ariel, B. (2015). Targeting Escalation in Reported Domestic Abuse: Evidence From 36,000 Callouts. *International Criminal Justice Review*, 25(1), 30–53.
- Callaghan, J. E. M., Alexander, J. H., Sixsmith, J., & Fellin, L. C. (2018). Beyond “Witnessing”: Children’s Experiences of Coercive Control in Domestic Violence and Abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 33(10), 1551–1581.
- Crown Prosecution Service. (2017). *Domestic abuse*. Retrieved from <https://www.cps.gov.uk/domestic-abuse>
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- Oliver, R., Alexander, B., Roe, S., & Wlasny, M. (2019). *The economic and social costs of domestic abuse*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-domestic-abuse>