

# Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition **PE1909**: Remove the ‘gender-based crime’ domestic abuse narrative and make it gender neutral and equal, lodged by William Wright

## Background

The petition argues for changes in the approach to tackling domestic abuse in Scotland. It seeks the adoption of a gender-neutral response. For example, in relation to:

- how the Scottish Government describes domestic abuse
- policies and practices within the police and prosecution services
- provision of support services.

Some elements of the current approach to domestic abuse reflect an analysis that violence against women and girls (VAWG) is linked to inequality between men and women.

## Criminal law

Relevant criminal offences apply equally to men and women. These include the offence set out in the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2018, as well as other offences which can be used in cases of domestic abuse (for example, the common law offence of assault).

## Policy and practice

The Scottish Government's approach to tackling VAWG, including domestic abuse, involves a 'gendered analysis' of the problem. The approach is explained in a document produced in conjunction with COSLA [What does gender have to do with violence against women?](#) (2010).

In 2014 the Scottish Government and COSLA published a [joint strategy](#) on preventing and eradicating VAWG. It was updated in 2018.

Police Scotland and the Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service have published a [joint protocol on challenging domestic abuse](#) (5<sup>th</sup> ed. 2019). It sets out a definition of domestic abuse, within which "it is acknowledged that domestic abuse as a form of gender base violence is predominately perpetrated by men against women" (p 2). However, the definition also notes the abuse of men by women, and of abuse within LGBT relationships.

## Statistics

[Scottish Women's Aid](#) notes that domestic abuse is "overwhelmingly experienced by women and perpetrated by men".

Annual statistical bulletins published by the Scottish Government include a series dealing specifically with [domestic abuse recorded by the police](#). In 2019-20, 82% of recorded incidents involved a female victim and male accused.

## Key organisations and relevant links

- [Abused Men in Scotland](#) (AMIS)
- [Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service](#)
- [Police Scotland](#)
- [Scottish Women's Aid](#)
- [Victim Support Scotland](#)

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The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at [spice@parliament.scot](mailto:spice@parliament.scot)

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