

22.01.18

6 Deputy K.F. Morel of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding violent crimes (OQ.14/2022)

Since 2020, what proportion of violent crimes have been committed by men against women, and what initiatives are in place to reduce the number of such crimes and to ensure women feel safe in Jersey?

Deputy G.C. Guida of St. Lawrence (The Minister for Home Affairs):

In 2020, 22 per cent of all assaults, 16 per cent of all serious violence and 20 per cent of all violent crime were perpetrated by a male suspect against a female victim. In 2021, 20 per cent of all assaults, 21 per cent of all serious violence and 20 per cent of violent crime were perpetrated by a male suspect against a female victim. These figures change dramatically when you look at sexual crime. We come up to 67 per cent of female victims and 88 per cent in 2021. If you look at domestic violence the figures, again, change dramatically, 73 per cent of victims of domestic abuse are female. If you limit those figures again to domestic violence and sexual offences, we are talking about 93 per cent; so 93 per cent of victims of sexual offences in a domestic setting are female. A number of initiatives are currently in place or in the process of launching. This includes a taskforce on improving women's safety, as agreed in the Government Plan. We are lodging the new domestic abuse law, which will be debated in March. We are investing in support services, including the Sexual Assault Referral Centre and, for those who are listening to this, this is a very, very important first step in any case of domestic abuse or sexual violence. I am even going to give the number again, 01 ...

The Bailiff:

Minister, I am sure the number can be published but we have reached now 2 minutes and 17 seconds against one minute and 30 seconds, which is the norm for allowing for an answer.

Deputy G.C. Guida:

I am sure the following questions will allow me to elaborate.

The Bailiff:

I am sure they will, yes.

3.6.1 Deputy K.F. Morel:

A 2-part supplemental question. One would be to ask what the appropriate telephone number is for the Sexual Assault Referral Centre? Also, could the Minister advise the Assembly as to how well the authorities and various services have progressed in reducing the incidence of violence by men against women in the last few years?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

The telephone number to the S.A.R.C. (Sexual Assault Referral Centre), which, again, I really must insist on this, it is the first port of call; it is totally, totally geared towards violence against women, towards domestic abuse. You have access to all sorts of services, including independent sexual violence advisers, you are followed and helped all the time. It is really, really important and it is a phone call any time of the day, any day of the week; 01534888222. I really recommend that anybody who needs help calls them, it will be provided. The second question is the progress. It seems that domestic violence has come down a little bit in the last 3 years but of course the very big

problem with both sexual violence and domestic violence is the detection rate; is how many cases come to the knowledge of the authorities and how many cases can be pursued. Again, there should not be a barrier to declaring an instance of domestic violence or declaring an instance of sexual violence. Come forward, you will be helped.

The Bailiff:

Very well. I have listed to ask questions here Deputy Higgins, the Connétable of St. Brelade, Deputy Doublet, Deputy Perchard, Deputy Ward and then there will be a final supplementary. May I remind Members that this Minister is facing a period of questions without notice and, therefore, this subject can be explored rather more at length later on? I will allow those questions because I have noted them but I will not allow any more and will be significantly over the time.

3.6.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

As very often there is a link between harassment and violence against women, how seriously does he feel that the police are taking harassment cases?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

The only thing I can say is very seriously. We take all cases seriously. There is no limitation to what you can come and complain about to the police and it will be investigated.

[10:15]

3.6.3 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I am afraid the experience that I and other Deputies have had representing some women who have been harassed has not been that positive by the States of Jersey Police. As the Police Complaints Board is totally ineffective, what action will the Minister take to ensure that harassment cases are properly dealt with?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

The regulations and laws governing the work of the Police Complaints Authority have changed recently and it has been given much more powers. It can now follow in direct investigations, rather than just examining them when they are finished, so that is very, very important. There is no policy that says that we should not follow harassment, that harassment is a lesser crime. Again, these should be investigated fully.

3.6.4 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Would the Minister be aware in the statistics he quoted what proportion are related to drink or alcohol?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

I apologise, I do not have a figure but from experience I know that is pretty high; alcohol is a major, major issue in domestic violence. It is known it is a problem.

3.6.5 The Connétable of St. Brelade:

Please would the Minister support a revision to the licensing laws?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

I think we need to have a drug and alcohol strategy for the Island. We used to, it was suspended for a few years but we are restarting it. Health hired a person to take care of the drug and alcohol

strategy and that is definitely a job for them, where we need to go somewhere with this and not just let it happen.

3.6.6 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour:

The Minister quoted figures on violent crime and then he went on to quote figures on domestic violence. Were these figures on domestic violence included in the initial figures on violent crime, please?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

Yes, indeed, we are talking about all crime, so the original figures are for all crime. I mentioned assaults and serious violence; yes, the domestic abuse figures are quoted within those.

3.6.7 Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Could the Minister please circulate these figures to Members, please?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

Absolutely, yes.

3.6.8 Deputy J.H. Perchard of St. Saviour:

Given that so much violence against women is carried out by male perpetrators, what plans are in place to undertake preventative and rehabilitative measures targeting male perpetrators of violence?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

I think this is quite important. Thanks to the Constable of St. Martin we now have a budget to do 2 very important things, and the first one is something that was really needed in Jersey to call for evidence. But we are going to work on knowing exactly where the problem is in Jersey and whether it is different from any other jurisdiction. The other part of this is to create a taskforce to which, of course, Members of the Assembly will be invited and that will define what we can do to help, according to the results of the survey. However, we have not waited for that. The U.K., for example, has done its call for evidence a year ago and created a Violence Against Women and Girls delivery plan; it is published by the National Police Chiefs' Council. We completely agree with their recommendations and it is definitely something that we want to do. It looks at 3 paths. One of them is creating safe space for women. The other one is to relentlessly pursue perpetrators, and I think that is very, very important and probably the most difficult thing. But the third one is quite interesting. That it was found as one of the most important parts, is rehabilitation is working on offenders. We know that perpetrators of sexual violence are a small group of repeat offenders and it is quite clear that working on them is going to be a very large part of the solution.

3.6.9 Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Thank you to the Minister for outlining his plans. Are there currently any programmes in place that are aimed at preventing or rehabilitating male perpetrators of violent or sexual crimes against women?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

Sorry, I did not catch that.

The Bailiff:

Are there any such programmes currently in place?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

We have a rape and serious sexual offences action plan for 2022, which exists; it is something that is already done. Of course, that is the 2022 one, there was a 2021 one. I was asked once by a journalist when we published the crime figures in Jersey, which are quite good compared to anywhere else in the world: "That is it, are you happy with that?" I said: "No, the only thing that the police would be happy with is zero crime. That is not a level at which we say that is fine, we can go on holiday. We want zero crime." Certainly as far as violence against women and girls is concerned we want none of it, that is our rule.

3.6.10 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Does the Minister feel that the balance between the actions that women have to take to prevent attacks is balanced with the actions that men should be taking who perpetrate those crimes? Does he see that that attitude needs to be addressed urgently in order to stop these crimes happening, rather than asking women yet again to take more action to protect themselves?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

I am sorry, I am trying to understand the question. Women should not be a victim, there is nothing that defines a woman as a victim and certainly we would not ask them to behave differently, to not be a victim; that makes very, very little sense, however, there are predators out there. Nobody in this Assembly, I guess - and it would be interesting to hear otherwise - leaves their front door open. I am not just saying unlocked but open. They know that there are very, very few people in the Island who would take advantage of that. Everybody needs to think about their own safety, however, we should not make females victims; they should not be natural victims. The notion of that is completely abhorrent, it should not be right that a female would feel herself as a natural victim. I cannot understand that and certainly it is nowhere where we can stop. Was that the question?

The Bailiff:

Could you bring that answer to a close, please, Minister? Once again we have passed the one minute 30 seconds. Do you have a supplementary question, Deputy Ward?

3.6.11 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Yes, Sir. It was not quite the question I was asking, let me put it in this way. Could I ask the Minister, does he feel that more work should be done with men, right from the beginning of their education in schools because of their attitudes to women, as a matter of urgency, so that we can address the attitudes that create offenders early on? I think that is probably a better wording of the question.

Deputy G.C. Guida:

Yes, thank you very much and much more understandable for me. Definitely. We do know that we have a general cultural problem and that must be worked on, so absolutely. Certainly the one that is extremely important for me because it is the key to court cases, it is a notion of consent. Consent is absolutely paramount and it is something that we really, really need to teach and bring in at a very, very early age.

3.6.12 Deputy K.F. Morel:

I thank the Minister for his answers to all of the questions. In the Minister's own estimation, would he say that women can feel safe in Jersey, particularly when out and about?

Deputy G.C. Guida:

I would say, yes. We have a lower level of crime than most places in the world, so Jersey is, in general, a safe place; 50 per cent of violence against a person is domestic abuse related and I think that is definitely a problem that we need to address. It seems to be still lower in Jersey than it is, for example, in the U.K. but we know that there is so little detection of cases; that it is definitely something we will need to work on. The new law will be an extremely good start for this because we have a proper and modern definition of domestic abuse and I really hope we can work on this.

The Bailiff:

Thank you very much, Minister. It is a little bit before 10.30 a.m. when the Assembly is to adjourn. I propose, therefore, to adjourn now and to resume again at 2.15 p.m.