

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS
BY DEPUTY M.R. HIGGINS OF ST. HELIER
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON MONDAY 29th MARCH 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON WEDNESDAY 7th APRIL 2021**

Question

Following the disclosure that there had been 650 sexual assaults against women reported to the States of Jersey Police in the last five years, resulting in only 72 convictions, will the Minister advise (from the Police perspective) why so many of these cases fail to be brought to court, and explain the relatively small number of convictions arising from these cases?

Answer

The disparity between the numbers of sexual offences being reported to police and the numbers of cases being prosecuted and then convicted is of both national concern and concern in Jersey. These are often complex cases involving just 2 parties and with differing perspectives often centred on the issue of 'consent'. Other reasons include some deeply seated societal challenges such as myths and stereotypes and sub-conscious bias that can impact on jury decision making as well as some new challenges for police and prosecutors relating to digital evidence and changes in sexual behaviour (move to more online offending including stalking and harassment). Other challenges are peculiar to Jersey and the small island context.

Approximately a third of victims in Jersey do not support a prosecution – not all victims are seeking a criminal justice outcome, which is why we have invested heavily in our Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) over recent years. Both these services ensure victims receive medical care as well as other therapeutic interventions. They provide victims with options and choices and the ISVA service will support victims through the criminal justice process should they choose to support a prosecution.

The SoJP have run a number of campaigns in recent years, most recently focussing on the issues of consent and perpetrators.

In the year to April 2019 to March 2020, just 1.4% of rape cases recorded by police in England & Wales resulted in a suspect being charged. In Jersey it was 6% in 2019 and 3% in 2020. The police and Law Officer Department are currently working on a joint action plan in an effort to improve the numbers of prosecutions.