

eReport

IMPROVING THE
REPORTING OF
RAPE USING
TECHNOLOGY



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INTRODUCTION

Technology is revolutionising behaviour, and altering the way in which people expect to be able to interact with each other and the services they rely upon. While businesses have been quick to introduce technological advances and improve the way they interact with consumers, public services, especially the criminal justice sector, have been slow to catch-up.

Younger people, especially, now have an expectation that services will be available online, and often experience a large portion of their lives online. Research has shown that 45 per cent of young people feel happiest while they are online, and 86 per cent of young people believe that new technology helps them communicate with people¹. Even amongst older people, there is a move towards digital interaction being preferred to human interaction in many situations².

Internet-connected technology has the potential to play a far bigger role in making it easier for people to report crime. It also offers an opportunity for the police to provide a far more appropriate experience for victims.

The Home Secretary has already announced that the Home Office, alongside Surrey Police and Sussex Police, is developing “a prototype for people to report non-emergency crime online”. This online reporting has been estimated to have the potential to save police forces in England and Wales 180,000 officer hours a year, and around £3.7 million³.

However, with the online reporting of some, more minor, crimes becoming a reality – it is time to consider how other, far more serious, crimes may also be reported via non-traditional methods.

Rape is a hugely underreported crime. Estimates suggest that there are between 60,000 and 95,000 people raped each year, and a vast number of these go unreported⁴. Therefore there is clearly a large group of victims who are not engaged with the current available methods of reporting who would benefit from new and improved avenues to report such crimes.

In the words of the former Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Keir Starmer, “innovative” solutions are required to boost the number of rape victims who feel confident enough to report their experiences⁵. Technological innovations provide such an opportunity.

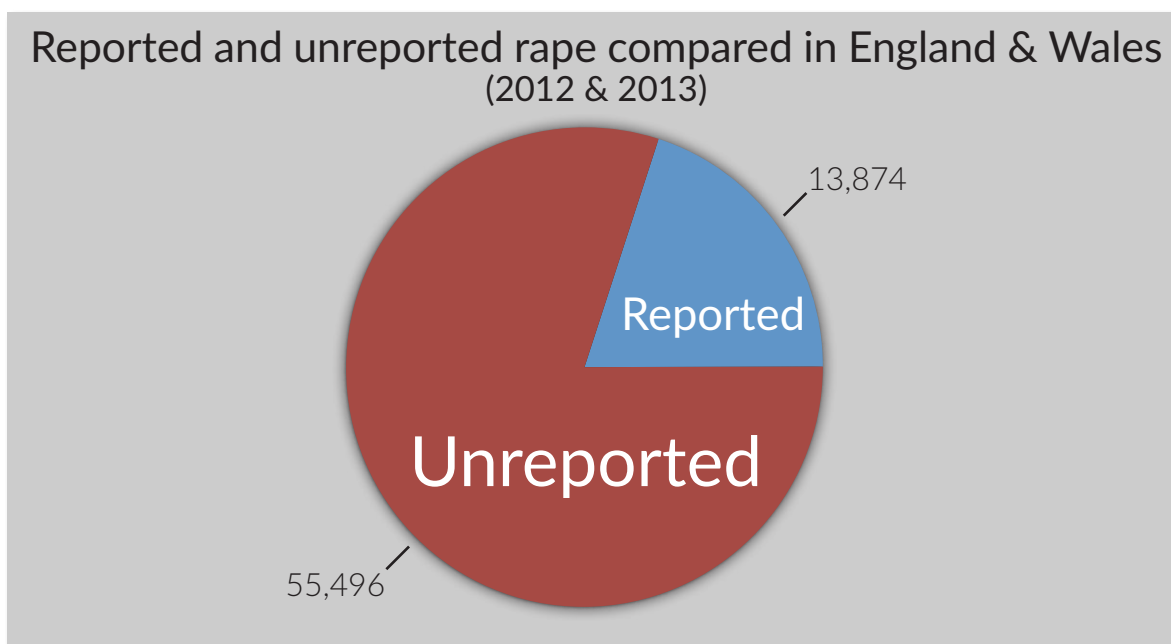
1. Young people's needs in the digital age – YouthNet. Published 2011. <http://www.youthnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Life-Support-Report.pdf>

2. 8 out of 10 shoppers prefer digital help over human interaction – Marketing Pilgrim. Published April 2014. <http://www.marketingpilgrim.com/2014/04/8-out-of-10-shoppers-prefer-digital-help-over-human-interaction.html>

3. Home Secretary at the International Crime & Policing Conference – Speech delivered on 28th January 2015. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/home-secretary-at-the-international-crime-policing-conference>

4. An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales – Ministry of Justice, Home Office & the Office for National Statistics. Published 10th January 2013. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214970/sexual-offending-overview-jan-2013.pdf

5. Sir Keir Starmer - speech to Better Courts Conference. Published 4th February 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/law/2015/feb/04/keir-starmer-rape-victims-police-stations-justice-legal>



RAPE RECORDING STATISTICS

Estimates compiled in a joint report by the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and the Office for National Statistics suggest that each year between 60,000 and 95,000 rapes take place.

A mid-range estimate would suggest that 78,000 people are raped in England and Wales each year. Using the same mid-range estimate, the police will only receive 15,670 reports of rape. This means that around 80 per cent of all rapes, 62,330, will be unreported.⁶

These estimates provided by the Ministry of Justice, Home Office and the Office for National Statistics, based on three year averages, provide a formula for estimating the total number of rapes which take place each year, and the percentage of them which are not reported to the police.

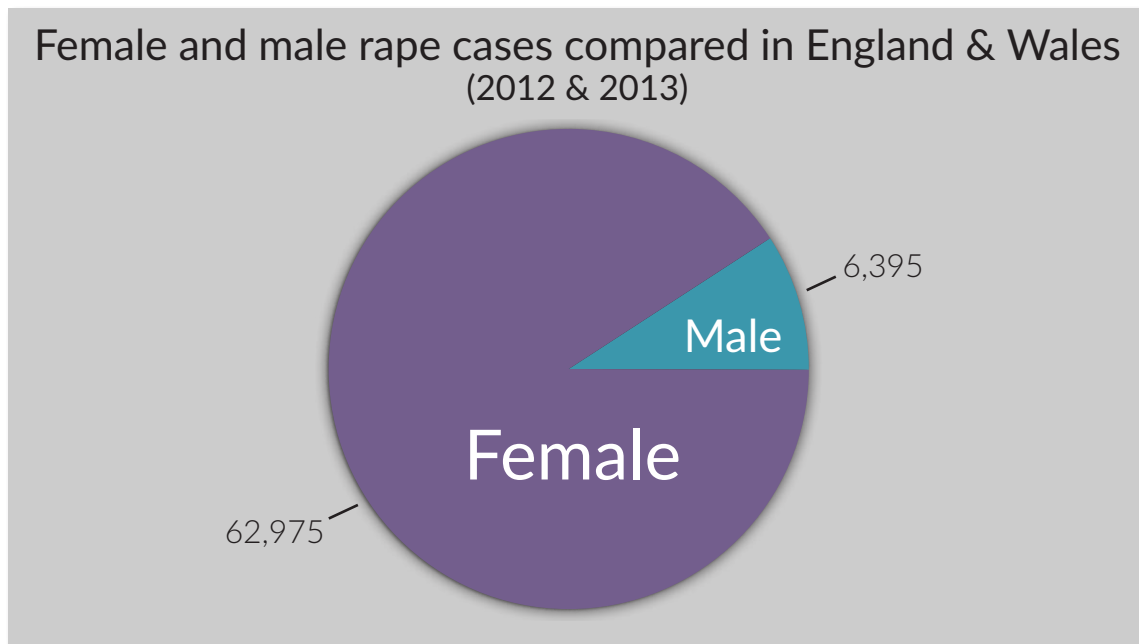
Using figures from England and Wales' six largest police forces on the number of rapes they recorded it is possible to estimate that over two years in 2012 and 2013 there were a total of 69,370 rapes, of which 55,496 were not reported to the police.

Again using figures from England and Wales' six largest police forces on the number of rapes recorded in 2012 and 2013, it is possible to estimate that 62,975 females and 6,395 males were raped. Of these, 50,380 rapes of females and 5,116 rapes of males were not reported to the police.

In London specifically over the same time period, while the Metropolitan Police Service recorded 6,976 rapes – estimates suggest that in total there were 34,880 rapes, which means that 27,904 rapes were not reported to the police.

This equates to 32,030 females and 2,850 males being raped with 25,624 female and 2,280 male rapes not being reported to the police.

⁶. An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales – Ministry of Justice, Home Office & the Office for National Statistics. Published 10th January 2013.



THIRD PARTY REPORTING OF RAPE

The Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates that 72% of all females who are victims of the most serious sexual offences, including rape, told someone about their experiences and 57% of them disclosed their rape to someone other than the police⁷.

However it is clear that the number of people disclosing their experience of rape to a third party is not translating into those incidents ultimately being reported to the police⁸.

Not all police forces in England and Wales automatically record when a rape is referred to them via a third party. Of the six largest police forces in England and Wales, only the Metropolitan Police Service, Greater Manchester Police and Thames Valley Police ensure the limited recording of third party notifications takes place during the reporting process.

It has always been considered challenging to encourage the victims of serious sexual offences to disclose what they have experienced to the police. Traditional methods of reporting serious offences like rape are failing to work adequately.

With such a high number of rapes going unreported in England and Wales, it is apparent that the current methods of engaging with victims in order to encourage them to contact the police need reconsidering and improving.

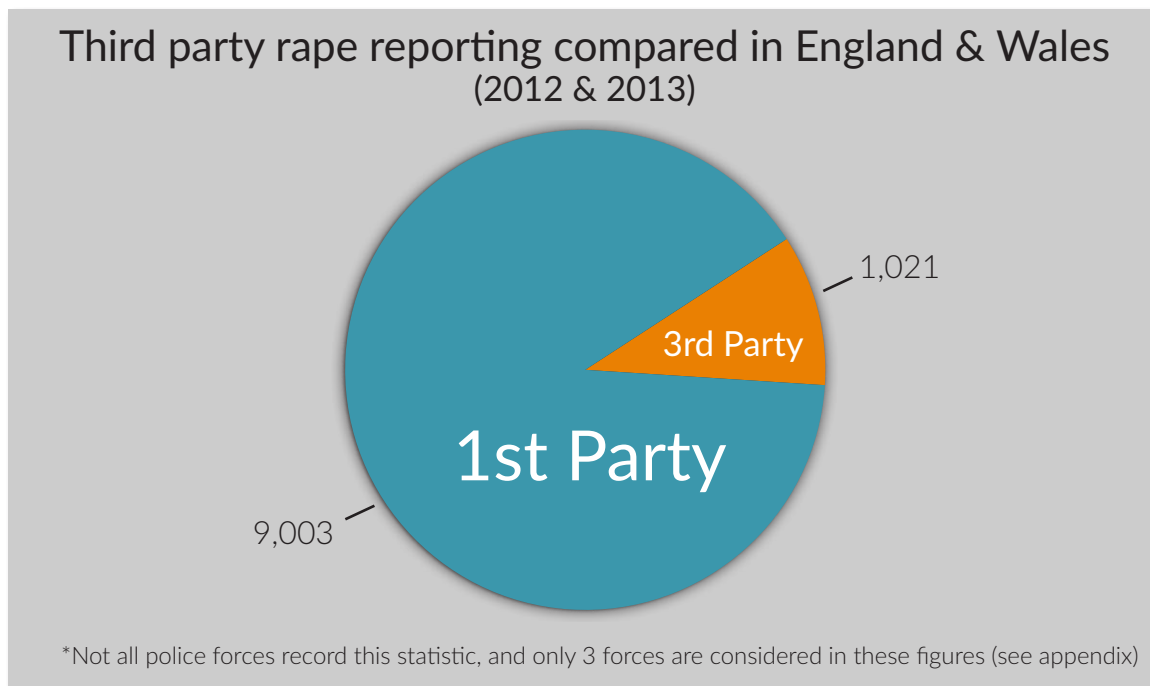
Simply expecting the victims of rape to contact the police clearly does not work. As suggested by the former Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Keir Starmer, we “need to get away from the notion of police stations being where people report crimes, particularly sexual crimes”⁹.

There is currently a mistaken view of how victims of serious sexual offences behave which leads to repeated failures in the criminal justice process. The notion that following a rape, victims will automatically go straight to the police is deeply embedded in public perceptions but rarely the

7. Sexual offending overview tables – Office for National Statistics. Published 10th January 2013. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214971/overview-sexual-offending-jan-2013-tables.zip

8. These figures are the only available estimates on who rape is reported to, and have been used to further estimate figures for both males and females. The dataset differs slightly from the estimate of the number of rapes, which is the reason for any slight disparity.

9. Sir Keir Starmer - speech to Better Courts Conference. Published 4th February 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/law/2015/feb/04/keir-starmer-rape-victims-police-stations-justice-legal>



case¹⁰. It is also important to consider that only until recently it was the duty of a judge during a trial to inform the jury that a victim of rape had not gone straight to the police¹¹.

Police forces across England and Wales currently receive a very low number of rape allegations via a third party. Using the figures available from three of the largest six forces in England and Wales who monitor third party reporting, for 2012 and 2013¹², there were only 1,021 rapes reported via a third party – out of a total number of 10,024 rapes recorded.

The Metropolitan Police Service only received 153 reports of rape via a third party, out of a total number of 6,976 recorded rapes.

Using data from the Crime Survey of England and Wales it is possible to estimate the number of rape victims who disclosed their experiences to someone, but not the police in 2012 and 2013. The estimates suggest that within the three forces who monitor the number of third party reports they receive, 28,568 victims disclosed they had been raped to a third party – of this number, 27,547 rapes were not subsequently reported to the police after having been initially disclosed elsewhere.

In the geographical area covered by the Metropolitan Police Service there were only 153 third party reports of rape in 2012 and 2013. Therefore, estimates suggest that while 19,882 victims disclosed they had been raped to a third party – a total number of 19,729 rapes were not subsequently reported to the police after having been initially disclosed elsewhere.

Given there is such a significant number of rapes that appear to be disclosed to a third party, yet subsequently not reported to the police – especially in London – there are clearly barriers which prevent the sharing of information. Therefore it would be welcome if MOPAC were able to engage further with organisations that support the victims of rape. Better relationships with these organisations may act as a catalyst to encourage an increase in the third party reporting of rape to the police. While in some areas of the country the voluntary sector has a close relationship with

10. R v D (JA) [2008] EWCA Crim 2557 – Bailii. Published October 2008. <http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Crim/2008/2557.html>

11. Guidance on investigating and prosecuting rape – ACPO. Published 2010. http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/crime/2011/20110303%20CBA.%20Guidance%20for%20Investigating%20and%20Prosecuting%20Rape_Public%20Facing_2010.pdf

12. Only the Metropolitan Police Service, Greater Manchester Police and Thames Valley police were able to provide the number of rapes reported via a third party.

the police, these relationships are not as strong in London¹³.

Another issue related to the monitoring of third party reporting of rape is that police forces across England and Wales do not routinely have to record that an report was received via a third party. If police forces were expected to clearly record such information, it would enable governmental and non-governmental organisations who support the victims of rape the opportunity to monitor success levels and develop better strategies to encourage the disclosure of incidents.

RECOMMENDATION #1 – MOPAC should work to increase its contact with organisations who support the victims of rape in order to encourage more victims to report their experiences to the police.

RECOMMENDATION #2 – The Mayor of London should lobby the Home Secretary to introduce legislation which would require police forces in England and Wales to routinely record reports of rape they received via a third party.

TECHNOLOGY IN CRIME REPORTING

The use of technology in the criminal justice sector to aid and encourage the reporting of crime has been relatively limited. While following the launch of neighbourhood crime mapping via Police.uk there is now a swathe of independent mobile and web applications which allow people to monitor crime levels in their local area¹⁴, there has been little official use of the same technology to allow victims to report crimes they experience directly to the police.

Using estimates from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, it is possible to suggest that across the six largest forces in England and Wales in 2012 and 2013, 39,541 individuals disclosed their rape but did not inform the police, and 19,423 rape victims told no one of their experience. This creates a potential cohort of 58,964 victims who did not feel able to report their experiences to the police. This cohort's experiences could potentially be greatly improved through the introduction of new methods of reporting rape.

Even if only a conservative estimate of 29,482 individuals (half of the estimated cohort) who may benefit from improvements, is used – this is still an incredibly high number of rape victims whose experience of and confidence in the criminal justice system could be greatly improved.

Technology not only offers a large number of previously hidden victims new ways of reporting their experiences, it also enables the targeting of such reports at the correct departments within police forces. This would prevent victims fearing that they would be required to continually disclose their experiences to different police officers, and they would instead be put directly in contact with specialist police officers.

SMARTPHONE AND TABLET APPLICATIONS

Private companies like Witness Confident have attempted to introduce smartphone crime reporting applications such as Self Evident, which is described as being able to validate and “secure evidence” alongside reporting a crime to the police¹⁵. However at the time of their release, police

13. Conversation between GLA Conservatives and a representative of a leading rape charity based in the north of England who explained their close relationship with their local police force, and confirmed that similar relationships between charities in London and the Metropolitan Police Service are not as strong. 24 February 2015.

14. Police.uk – Apps. <http://www.police.uk/apps/>

15. Self Evident – Witness Confident. Released in September 2013. <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/self-evident/id571644999?mt=8>

forces across England and Wales advised against using such applications to report crime because there was no guarantee that the reports submitted would be accurately recorded by the police and this could damage any future investigation¹⁶.

There is currently a gap in the market for a police-designed smartphone and tablet application. Police forces, including the Metropolitan Police Service, have been slow to develop their own mobile applications. While an application designed by the Metropolitan Police Federation currently allows warranted police officers to record their overtime and expenses¹⁷ – there is no such application to allow the victims of serious crime to provide reports to the police.

In many situations where serious sexual offences, including rape, have occurred victims are left in a position where they are unable to visit a police station, or telephone the emergency services due to a fear of being seen or overheard. The introduction of an easily downloadable, small, and free mobile application would enable a victim of rape to discreetly download the application and compile a report to the police. Once this report had been compiled, the application could be deleted and there would be no visible record on the victim's phone as to what they had done.

The introduction of such a mobile application would offer victims who are often subject to significant coercion and are prevented from having the freedom of movement or association an opportunity to disclose their situation to the police. This would then enable the police to formulate an appropriate response.

The initial design of a native smartphone application would usually cost between £15,000 and £25,000 per platform it is designed for¹⁸, if an external designer was used – however the costs could be cheaper should an in-house designer be used.

Therefore, should a police force wish to design a stand-alone application for Apple's iTunes App Store and Google's Play Store, there is a potential initial cost of between £30,000 and £50,000. While it would be imperative that the application is free to download, there may be advertising opportunities within the application to regain some of the initial funding, however these would be limited¹⁹. There would, however, be opportunities for these applications to be sponsored either by a business or via a grant from a charity, thereby mitigating the costs.

Any crime reporting application should work in a similar manner to the private applications already on the market. It should enable a victim to capture evidence via videos, photos or audio recordings. Victims should also be able to provide a written statement. This would enable victims to provide as much information as possible, in a limited time period – this information, once sent, should be directly received by specialist officers who are then able to assess the reports.

RECOMMENDATION #3 – The Metropolitan Police Service should, working alongside MOPAC and the Mayor commission a specific mobile application which will allow the victims of serious sexual offences to report their experiences to the police.

WEBSITES

Police forces across England and Wales, including the Metropolitan Police Service, already offer the ability to report some minor crimes via an online portal. This type of service provision does not exist for the victims of serious sexual offences, including rape.

16. Conversation held with Press Officer at the Association of Chief Police Officers. 12 February 2015.

17. MetFed – Metropolitan Police Federation. Updated 13 June 2014. <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/metfed/id664722076?mt=8>

18. What is the cost of developing apps for mobile marketplaces? – Computer Weekly. 22 March 2011. <http://www.computerweekly.com/news/1280097329/What-is-the-cost-of-developing-apps-for-mobile-marketplaces>

19. How much do average apps make? – Forbes. Published 8 October 2012. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/tristanlouis/2013/08/10/how-much-do-average-apps-make/>

Websites have regularly been used in order to boost the number of rape victims who report their experiences to the police, but this is done by offering advice and information on how the reporting process works. They do not allow the reporting of a rape online.

In 2012, the Metropolitan Police Service launched the “My Decision” website which provides a step-by-step guide for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted²⁰. The website offers valuable information on how the Metropolitan Police Service investigates sexual offences, and is part of work undertaken to help victims overcome the various barriers there are to reporting their experiences to the police.

While the website does request those using it to answer a series of questions about their experiences via clicking on various statements – in a similar manner to the NHS Direct online service, once they have completed the process they are not able to file a report to the police. Instead victims are instructed to either contact the police via 999 or the non-emergency 101 service.



Figure 1: The Metropolitan police ‘My Decision’ website (<http://www.mydecision.co.uk/>)

It would not require much substantial editing to the ‘My Decision’ website in order to allow those victims who have followed the online pathway to pass their contact details onto the police. Such an alteration would require limited coding alterations to the website, and could be done by those who are already for managing the Metropolitan Police Service’s web services. Any required encryption should be modelled on that already used by the Metropolitan Police Service for the limited online crime reporting opportunities currently available.

RECOMMENDATION #4 – The Metropolitan Police Service should update the My Decision website to allow reports of rape to be filed online.

20. My Decision – Metropolitan Police Service. Launched December 2012. <http://www.mydecision.co.uk/>

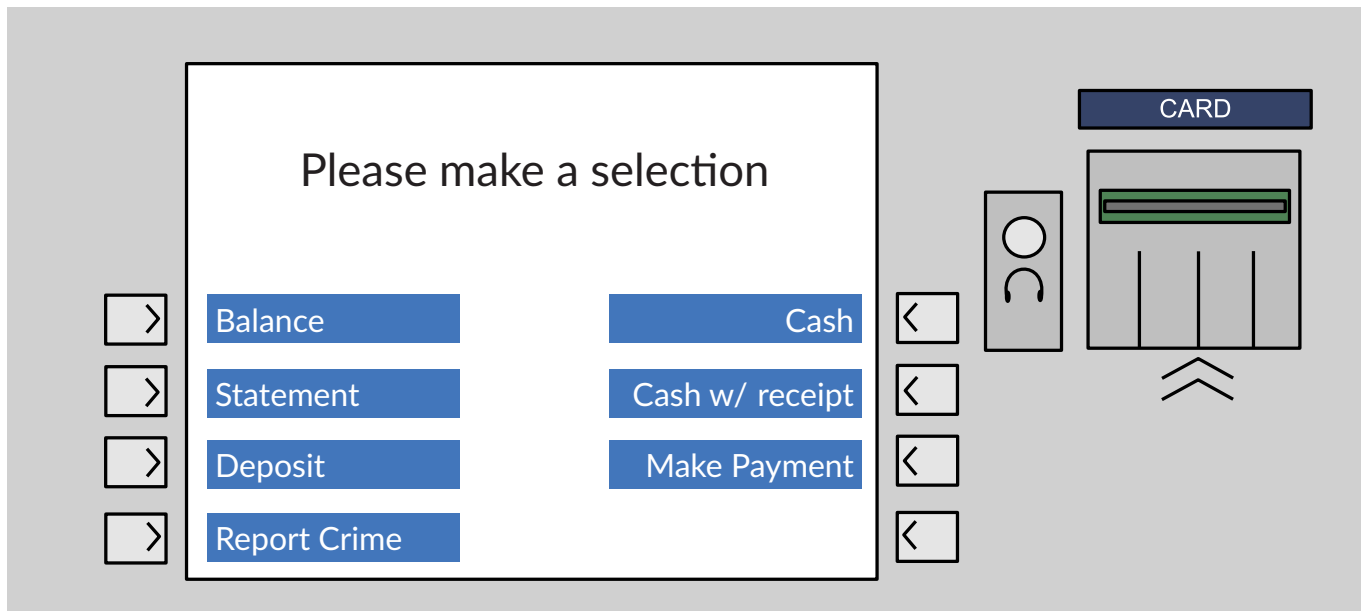


Figure 2: An illustration of how rape reporting could be integrated in current technology

AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINES

There are approximately 36,300 automated teller machines (ATMs) in the UK²¹. In the UK at the end of 2010 there were 45 million adults holding a debit card and 31 million adults holding a credit card²² – all of which are compatible with the UK's ATM network. All ATMs in the UK are connected via the LINK network. This means that a significant number of individuals come into contact with ATMs on a regular basis.

In India, where an analysis of crime data recently suggested that on average a rape takes place every 30 minutes²³ – there is considered to be an ingrained cultural stigma attached to reporting such crimes to the police. In order to encourage more victims to come forward, in one Indian state an ATM-like kiosk is being tested which allows victims to make complaints directly to the police.

The 'Instant Complaint Logging Internet Kiosk' has the ability to receive written and audio complaints, removing the requirement of a rape victim to visit a police station in order to report their experiences²⁴. Once a victim has reported the rape, their contact is responded to by specialist police officers. The kiosk is located inside a bank, alongside other ATMs, enabling rape victims to draw little attention to what they are doing.

Some banks in the UK are introducing similar ATM set-ups where a number of ATMs are grouped together indoors, rather than on the external walls of buildings. These areas within banks do offer an opportunity to introduce similar style machines to the Instant Complaint Logging Internet Kiosk', however it is clear they do not offer a great deal of privacy. This is because, as they would be standalone machines it would be clear to others that the kiosk is not an actual ATM.

Therefore, while standalone kiosks are not a viable option to increase the reporting of rape in the UK, similar technological developments – but built within existing ATMs, offer significant opportunities.

Currently the UK's ATM network is only configured to accept numerical commands, but with some

21. ATM statistics – LINK. <http://www.link.co.uk/AboutLINK/Statistics/Pages/Statistics.aspx>

22. Key facts – UK Cards Association. http://www.theukcardsassociation.org.uk/wm_documents/Introduction%20Cards%20A5.pdf

23. One rape every 30 minutes in India – Times of India. Published 28 July 2014. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/One-rape-every-30-minutes-in-India/articleshow/39128982.cms>

24. Soon ATM-like police kiosks – Hindustan Times. Published 30 November 2014. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/soon-atm-like-police-kiosks/article1-1291648.aspx>

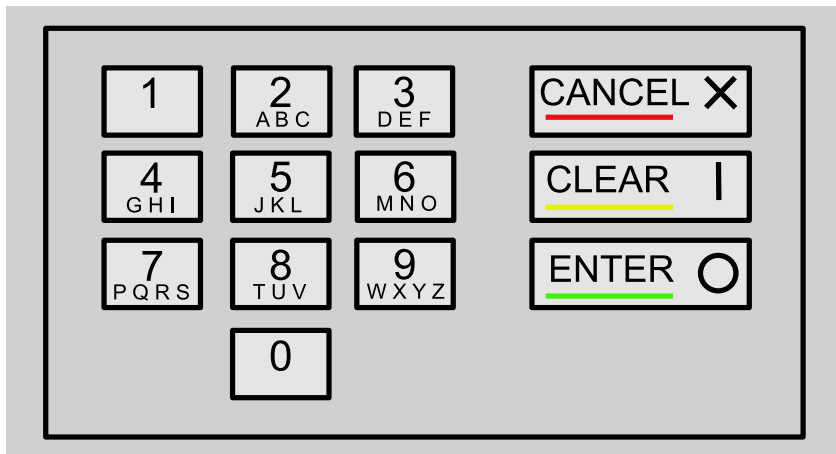


Figure 3: An alphanumeric keypad for an ATM

adjustments there is the ability to allow alphanumeric messages to be sent via the LINK network²⁵. These adjustments would also need to include the standardised introduction of alphanumeric rather than just numeric keyboards, so that text-based messages could be inputted.

Such modifications would enable the victims of serious sexual offences to use ATMs to send short messages, which would include the relevant contact information to be passed onto the police. On receipt of this information, the police would be empowered to dispatch specialist officers to initiate contact with the victim.

While there would be an associated cost with updating a bank's ATMs to accommodate the necessary changes, this is an area in which the Mayor of London should look to seek sponsorship from London's high street banks. Introducing such modifications and allowing such messages to be passed via their ATM network would be considered as part of London's high street banks response to corporate and social responsibility.

RECOMMENDATION #5 – The Mayor of London should negotiate a programme of sponsorship with a high street bank in London to update their ATMs to enable the sending of alphanumeric messages, which can then be used to report serious sexual offences to the Metropolitan Police Service.

GOVERNMENT-OPERATED PUBLIC-FACING COMPUTER SYSTEMS

There are numerous computer systems operated by national and local government which have public-facing screens. For example in London alone there are nearly 100 JobCentres, and a large number of public libraries which offer either the use of free computers, or other types of public-facing screens which are used to access public services.

All of these public-facing computer systems and screens should offer the opportunity to report serious sexual offences. While some of them, such as public computers in libraries would not require any modification should the Metropolitan Police Service update their My Decision website in order for it to receive reports from victims – others, such as the job searching kiosks would require software modification.

JobCentre kiosks were introduced over ten years ago, in order to simplify the process of searching for a job, and are designed in a simple to use manner in order to aid job hunters who may not

²⁵. Conversation between GLA Conservatives and industry experts on the condition of anonymity confirmed that the UK's ATM network would hypothetically carry alphanumeric messages.

have significant computer experience²⁶. In October 2014, the JobCentre undertook significant improvements in their use of technology in order to make the job hunting process easier – and this included more use of advanced technology²⁷.

This new technology, alongside the existing kiosks offers another opportunity for enabling the victims of serious sexual offences to report their experiences in an alternative way. Only via minimal software alterations, these kiosks could introduce an option of reporting a crime directly to the police.

Similar alterations should be considered for every public-facing system operated by national and local government in order to greatly increase the number of opportunities available to the victims of rape to report their experiences and be responded so by specialist officers.

All government-operated public-facing computer systems will already have been designed by software engineers and will be maintained by in-house engineers to prevent problems from developing. These individuals should be tasked with making these alterations as they would therefore be done so at a far lower cost than bringing in an external organisation to make the alterations. There is also an opportunity to seek sponsorship for these alterations to be made.

RECOMMENDATION #6 – The Mayor of London, working alongside local councils should introduce the ability to report serious sexual offences via readily available government-operated public-facing computer systems.

26. UK Jobcentres – Neo Products Group. Published October 2011 - <http://neoproductsgroup.com/product-solutions/case-studies/uk-jobcentres>

27. Jobcentres go digital – Department for Work and Pensions. Published October 2014. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/jobcentres-go-digital>

CONCLUSION

While it is estimated that a huge number of rapes takes place across England and Wales, a minority of them are ever reported to the police. This means there are clearly a significant number of barriers preventing victims from reporting their experiences. This means not only do offenders not receive any punishment; victims are left in a position where they may be unable to receive the valuable help they require to deal with their experiences.

As technology continues to alter the way in which individuals interact with the services they use, it offers a valuable opportunity to assist the victims of rape to come forward and report their experiences. There are real opportunities, especially with younger victims, to embrace changes in behaviour which sees far more than ever done online.

By using pieces of technology which victims may already use on a regular basis, such as smartphones, ATMs and jobcentre kiosks – more opportunities to report rape in a discreet manner will be created.

Internet-connected technology will enable victims to confidentially file reports to the police, and ensure that the response they receive comes from a specialist officer. This will also eliminate the number of times a victim is required to disclose their experiences at the beginning of the criminal justice process.

Technology is constantly making life easier, and there is no reason why it should not be used to actively used to reduce the difficulty that the victims of rape face when they wish to report their experiences to the police.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1 - MOPAC should work to increase its contact with organisations who support the victims of rape in order to encourage more victims to report their experiences to the police.

RECOMMENDATION #2 - The Mayor of London should lobby the Home Secretary to introduce legislation which would require police forces in England and Wales to routinely record reports of rape they received via a third party.

RECOMMENDATION #3 - The Metropolitan Police Service should, working alongside MOPAC and the Mayor commission a specific mobile application which will allow the victims of serious sexual offences to report their experiences to the police.

RECOMMENDATION #4 - The Metropolitan Police Service should update the My Decision website to allow reports of rape to be filed online.

RECOMMENDATION #5 - The Mayor of London should negotiate a programme of sponsorship with a high street bank in London to update their ATMs to enable the sending of alphanumeric messages, which can then be used to report serious sexual offences to the Metropolitan Police Service.

RECOMMENDATION #6 - The Mayor of London, working alongside local councils should introduce the ability to report serious sexual offences via readily available government operated public-facing computer systems.

APPENDIX

Raw data used to compile estimates on number of rapes:

Recorded Rape	2012		2013		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
Metropolitan Police Service	211	2964	359	3442	6976
Greater Manchester Police	89	768	100	949	1906
West Midlands Police	93	697	112	662	1564
West Yorkshire Police	63	655	100	865	1683
Merseyside Police	22	288	30	263	603
Thames Valley Police	31	463	69	579	1142
TOTAL	509	5835	770	6760	
TOTAL	6344		7530		
TOTAL	13874				

Recorded & Unrecorded Rape Combined	2012		2013		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
Metropolitan Police Service	1055	14820	1795	17210	34880
Greater Manchester Police	445	3840	500	4745	9530
West Midlands Police	465	3485	560	3310	7820
West Yorkshire Police	315	3275	500	4325	8415
Merseyside Police	110	1440	150	1315	3015
Thames Valley Police	155	2315	345	2895	5710
TOTAL	2545	29175	3850	33800	
TOTAL	31720		37650		
TOTAL	69370				

Unrecorded Rape	2012		2013		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
Metropolitan Police Service	844	11856	1436	13768	27904
Greater Manchester Police	356	3072	400	3796	7624
West Midlands Police	372	2788	448	2648	6256
West Yorkshire Police	252	2620	400	3460	6732
Merseyside Police	88	1152	120	1052	2412
Thames Valley Police	124	1852	276	2316	4568
TOTAL	2036	23340	3080	27040	
TOTAL	25376		30120		
TOTAL	55496				

Raw data on number of third party reports of rape:

Third Party Reports	2012		2013		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	
Metropolitan Police Service	6	90	9	48	153
Greater Manchester Police	44	285	48	318	695
West Midlands Police					
West Yorkshire Police					
Merseyside Police					
Thames Valley Police	5	66	14	88	173
TOTAL	55	441	71	454	
TOTAL	496		525		
TOTAL	1021				



FEEDBACK

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