



Trinity
College
Dublin

The University of Dublin

Opening up a National Conversation on Domestic Abuse:

Awareness Raising Campaigns in Ireland During
Covid-19

A Case Study

March 2022

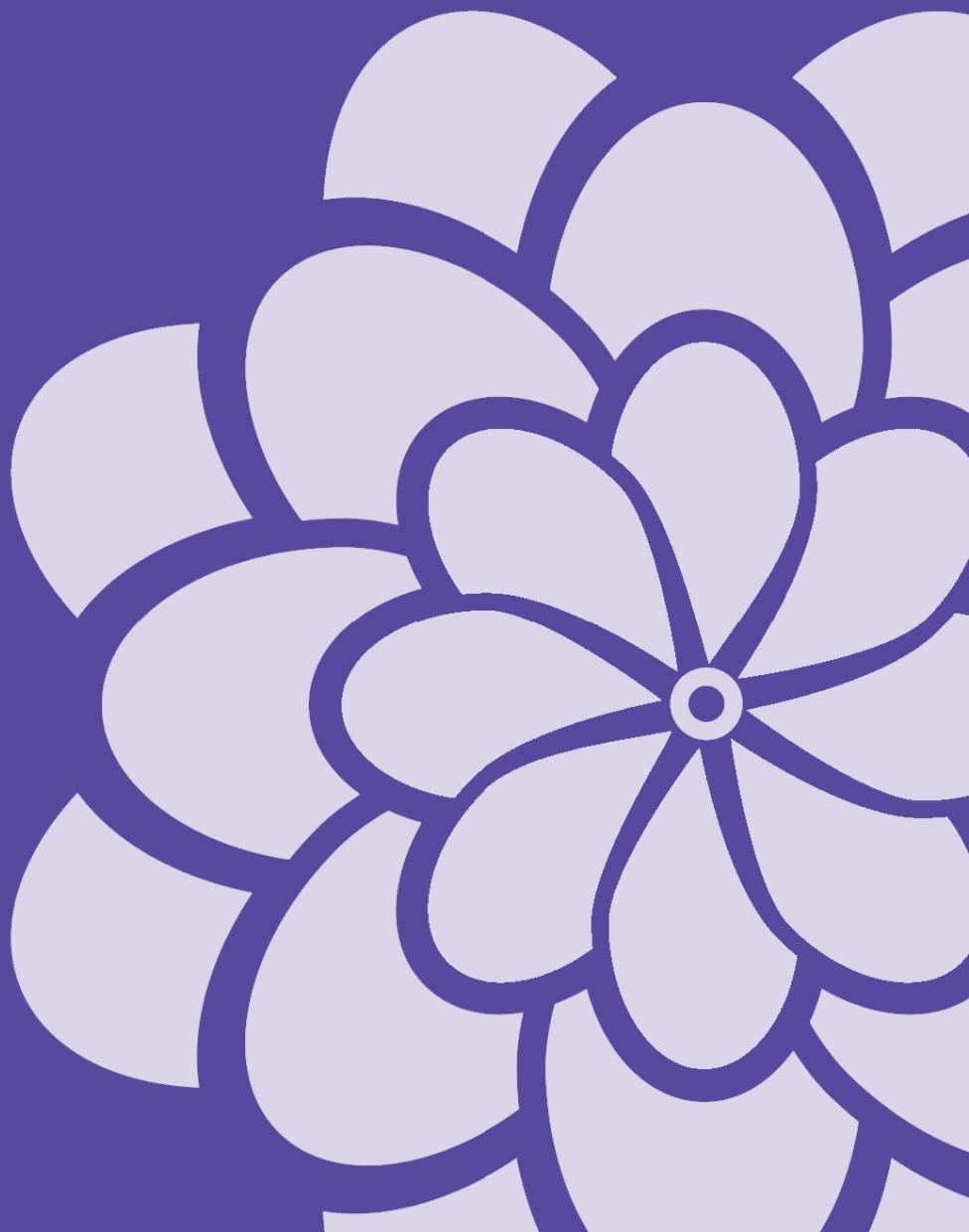
**Steph Holt, Soma Gregory &
Ruth Elliffe**

DAHLIA-19

DOMESTIC ABUSE:
Harnessing Learning Internationally under COVID-19

Contents

Foreword	1
Introduction	2
Background	2
Awareness raising under Covid-19	4
Methods	6
Rationale for Case Study	6
Methodology for data collection	7
Findings	8
Reach	8
Impact.	11
Barriers to impact	13
Recommendations for future campaigns	14
Conclusion	16
Appendix 1:	18
Pavee Point: 'Still Here' video messaging for Traveller and Roma communities.	18
Pavee Point: (Domestic Violence) 'It's Never Ok'. Preventative engagement with Traveller men through video messaging. . . .	19



Foreword

It is of vital importance to highlight a recent homicide in Ireland, which has left the nation stunned and angry. The incident occurred on the afternoon of 12th January 2022: 23 year-old Aisling Murphy was attacked and killed while out for a run along the Grand Canal just outside Tullamore, a regional midlands town in County Offaly. The senseless killing of this young woman has raised harsh questions and sparked urgent calls for action to address violence against women. It is against this backdrop that this Case Study was written.

Introduction

At the start of the pandemic in early 2020, concerns emerged from around the globe about increased levels of domestic abuse (DA) and the impact that public health measures and restrictions to slow down the transmission of the virus might have on victims of domestic abuse (DA)^{1 2 3}. In Ireland, Domestic Sexual and Gender Based Violence services (DSGBV), highlighted their concerns from early on that pandemic related public health restrictions could be misinterpreted, meaning victims might not flee or seek help because of the 'stay-at-home' directive, including 2km/5km restrictions on movement imposed during that period. In an effort to address this situation, the Department of Justice in collaboration with a number of leading DSGBV organisations, created a primary national media campaign entitled "Still Here". This Case Study will explore national media public awareness campaigns that were developed, or delivered, during the pandemic in Ireland. We commence by setting out some background information on the role of awareness raising in combatting DA, and pre-pandemic approaches to national media campaigns in Ireland. The Case Study then explores the main campaigns employed during Covid-19; including reach, impact, strengths and challenges. It will conclude with some reflections on the future promise of such campaigns, based on the learnings from this Case Study.

Background

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) considers awareness raising to be a critical component of prevention strategies, recognised as both an efficient and effective method of communicating information to the general public⁴. The EIGE suggests that awareness raising campaigns should aim to change attitudes and behaviours that tolerate DA, so preventing both victimisation and perpetration of DA, and provide information about supports and resources, conveying the central message that DA is an unacceptable violation of human rights⁵. Furthermore, Article 13 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against

¹ https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/28/lockdowns-world-rise-domestic-violence?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

² <https://time.com/5803887/coronavirus-domestic-violence-victims/>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7262164/>

⁴ <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/domestic-violence-awareness-raising>

⁵ <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/domestic-violence-awareness-raising>

Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) requires member states to engage in wide-ranging awareness-raising initiatives as one part of an extensive series of measures targeted at the prevention of violence against women (VAW). Translating these commitments into the Irish context, Action 1.100 of the [2nd National Strategy on Domestic sexual and Gender Based Violence \(DSGBV\) 2016-2021](#) lists Prevention, which comprises education, training and awareness, as a high-level goal, setting out a commitment to *'develop and implement a coherent national awareness raising campaign to achieve attitudinal and societal change to support the prevention of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence'*.

In fulfilment of this policy directive, a number of campaigns were implemented over the period of the [2nd National Strategy](#) in Ireland. The first was the "What would you do?" campaign⁶ (2016 - 2017). This national media campaign was primarily aimed at bystanders who observed any form of DA, urging them to act or offer support to victims. Historically in Ireland, as elsewhere, DA has been generally understood to be a personal or family matter which should remain private. This campaign challenged that status quo. However, the National Women's Council of Ireland commented that this campaign placed too much focus on bystanders' actions, rather than focusing on holding perpetrators' accountable for their abusive behaviour.⁷ Secondly, the 'No Excuses'⁸ campaign (2019 - present) commenced in 2019 and was planned at the time to run for three years. The focus of the campaign was on sexual harassment and sexual violence, aiming to affect societal change relating to behaviours and attitudes. Again, there was an onus on bystanders to take action. The national Police force (An Garda Síochána) website notes that *"Each of these ads features an example of sexual harassment or sexual violence accompanied by some of the excuses which people often use to excuse such behaviour when they see it."*⁹ While it was decided the campaign should be paused in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, this decision was subsequently reviewed (see below).

⁶ <https://www.thejournal.ie/domestic-abuse-2-3084760-Nov2016/>

⁷ <https://www.thejournal.ie/what-would-you-do-domestic-violence-3165403-Dec2016/>

⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/no-excuses/>

⁹ <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/our-departments/office-of-corporate-communications/news-media/news-archive/launches-of-radio-ads-as-part-of-%E2%80%98no-excuses-national-awareness-campaign-on-sexual-harassment-and-sexual-violence.html>

Awareness raising under Covid-19

2020 -2021 witnessed considerable emphasis on awareness raising of DA in Ireland with specific reference to Covid-19, comprising activities that were operationalised at three different levels: those that were national/government led; those that were driven independently by the DA sector; and those that were considered to have emerged at grassroots or local community levels. These are discussed in detail in the [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#). This Case Study focuses primarily on the 'Still Here' campaign, the major national awareness raising campaign addressing the issue of DA in the context of Covid-19 measures. A strength of this campaign was its clear, strong link to the official policing response to DA during the pandemic: Operation Faoiseamh¹⁰. The media element of Operation Faoiseamh served two purposes: to reassure victims of DA that An Garda Síochána (the national police force) was on hand to provide assistance to anyone experiencing DA during the pandemic restrictions, and to caution perpetrators that any instances of DA would be subject to the full weight of the law. To convey this 'zero tolerance' message, a robust media campaign was maintained by the Garda Press Office.

The 'Still Here' campaign was launched on the 15th April 2020. The TV¹¹, radio^{12 13} and social media advertisements were developed and funded by the Department of Justice and Equality in collaboration with a number of frontline services including Women's Aid, Safe Ireland, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, Rape Crisis Network Ireland, National Women's Council of Ireland and the Men's Development Network. The Department of Justice and Equality reported the total spend on the campaign to date as €474,698. The advertisements depicted the conceivable situations for both female and male victims of DA when their home is no longer a safe place. The television advertisement portrayed a woman's attempt to maintain contact with her friend by video call, as was commonplace during pandemic restrictions. However, the call is interrupted by her partner being threatening and abusive. The woman becomes increasingly distressed as the ad fades. The protagonists in the TV ad appear to be from white Irish backgrounds. The first radio advertisement revealed a mother trying to reassure and quieten her young child whilst pretending to play a game of 'Hide

¹⁰ [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping report](#).

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VTcVbHpCTVQ>

¹² <https://soundcloud.com/user-529324454/still-here-domestic-abuse-awareness-campaign-radio-advert-male>

¹³ <https://soundcloud.com/user-529324454/still-here-domestic-abuse-awareness-campaign-radio-advert-female>

and Seek', when in reality they are attempting to hide from their abuser. The second radio ad featured a male victim trying to covertly seek help from the emergency services whilst his female partner is heard being abusive in the background. The voices featured in the radio ad appear to be from Irish backgrounds.

In addition to the 'snapshot' portrayal of life in an abusive relationship under the pandemic, the campaign's second objective was to inform victims that restrictions on movement did not apply to those fleeing an unsafe situation or seeking to access essential services. The campaign message was that services had been increased and adapted to ensure that they remained operational throughout the pandemic, irrespective of the level of public health restrictions.

The campaign targeted all members of the population, and on this basis included minority and marginalised groups, such as those from the Traveller community, those from ethnic minority backgrounds and those from LGBTQ communities. The most recent Census (2016) found that largest group of non-Irish nationalities living in Ireland were Polish at approximately 2.5% of the total population. There were also sizeable communities from Lithuania, Romania, Latvia and Brazil¹⁴. In addition to those from other non-English speaking European Countries¹⁵. To date there remains no official estimate on what percentage of the population of Ireland are from the LGBTQ community¹⁶. The 2016 Census found that the Traveller community accounted for 0.7% of the Irish population¹⁷. The 'Still Here' campaign was not specifically aimed at these groups and did not adopt any special measures to ensure that these groups received the message.

In addition to the 'Still Here' campaign, in November 2020 the Department of Justice and Equality decided to relaunch the 'No Excuses' campaign discussed above¹⁸. The November 2020 roll-out also featured a new advertisement. This ad portrays a woman being harassed by a man while she exercises in the park, while a bystander debates whether or not to intervene. The Minister for Justice rationalised the decision to relaunch the campaign at this time by highlighting that "*sexual harassment and sexual violence do not stop in a pandemic*"¹⁹.

¹⁴ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpnin/cpnin/>

¹⁵ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpnin/cpnin/>

¹⁶ https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/libraryResearch/2019/2019-06-28_l-rs-infographic-lgbt-community-in-ireland-a-statistical-profile_en.pdf

¹⁷ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cp8iter/p8iter/p8itd/#::~:~:text=The%20total%20number%20of%20usually,the%202011%20figure%20of%2029%2C495>

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/674bc0-about-the-campaign/#introduction>

¹⁹ <https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR20000263>

Methods

Rationale for Case Study

The [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#) disseminated a 'Call for Evidence' to key stakeholders. This process involved the submission of documentary evidence, as well as interviews and focused expert consultations. During this 'Call for Evidence' it was revealed that national public messaging campaigns relating to DA in Ireland during Covid-19 were generally perceived very positively. The two primary national campaigns ('Still Here' campaign, Department of Justice and the media strand of Operation Faoiseamh, An Garda Síochána) were widely understood to be pivotal in generating public empathy and action against DA during the pandemic. However, while 'Still Here' was perceived as positive, the [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#) also highlighted some disconnect between the national message to the general population and its impact on those groups considered more marginalised including those from the Traveller community, ethnic minorities and LGBTQ. This Case Study will explore the 'Still Here' campaign in relation to these particular minority groups, as these were the groups that were identified most frequently as experiencing a greater disparity in reach and impact for national messaging during the [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#). The public messaging provided by the 'Still Here' campaign was an emergency response to address pandemic-specific DA concerns and as such has the potential to be replicable in other geographical contexts, and during future pandemics or crisis situations. The data appraisal tool used in the [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#) assessed the 'Still Here' campaign as a 'promising' initiative. Moreover, this is one of the only responses to DA under Covid-19 in Ireland where formal evaluations have been conducted. Finally, as further roll-outs of this campaign are planned and in light of the forthcoming publication of the 3rd National Strategy on DSGBV, which will include public awareness raising policy objectives, there is a clear rationale for critical appraisal of this initiative.

Methodology for data collection

The [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#) and this Case Study report were undertaken within a short period of approximately 15 months during the pandemic. Therefore, data was limited to what was available at that time. A consequence of the reliance on existing data is that it could limit the extent and quality of data, as opportunities for interventions to embed and mature were reduced. Ethical approval was obtained for the Dahlia-19 study by all four university partners contributing to the research.

This Case Study draws on relevant data collected for the [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#) which involved engagement with key stakeholders, interviews with representatives of relevant professional, policy, research and practice DA networks and the collection of documentary evidence and information. As this evidence revealed that the 'Still Here' campaign was generally perceived positively, it is worth considering how this pandemic initiative could be further strengthened in the event that a comparable approach is required in the future. For the purpose of this Case Study, the following sources of evidence were drawn on:

1. Two formal evaluations of the 'Still Here' awareness raising campaign;
2. Focused analysis of the responses to the 'Call for Evidence' from the [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#);
3. Supplementary expert interviews conducted with two key DA stakeholders and one broadsheet media journalist specifically for the Case Study;
4. Targeted expert consultations with seven front-line services working with migrant and ethnic minority populations including victims of DA, again focusing specifically on the Case Study;
5. Consultation with the Office of the Minister for Justice with responsibility for DA.



Findings

This section presents key findings emerging from the analysis of the data collected for this Case Study. Starting with a review and analysis of the national awareness raising campaigns, the focus of the Case Study narrows to consider targeted approaches to delivering messaging to minority groups, more specifically those from ethnic minority backgrounds and LGBTQ communities. We then provide recommendations on how future national awareness raising campaigns could be enhanced to ensure that minority or marginalised groups, who have been identified as being at greater risk of DA, are not excluded from national public awareness messaging.

Reach

The 'Still Here' campaign aimed to reach the wider population through television, radio and social media advertisements which directed individuals to the 'Still Here' website containing information and links to specialist services and supports for both female and male victims of DA, together with children's supports and legal information such as how to reach Gardaí and the Court services.

To date, two formal evaluations of this campaign have been carried out; the first was conducted by Coyne Research (2020)²⁰ (commissioned by the Department of Justice) and the second by Amárach Research (2020)²¹ (commissioned by Saoirse, a Dublin-based women's refuge). Both evaluations reported similarly high levels of public recall for the campaign, with the Coyne Research evaluation reporting that, among a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults in Ireland surveyed in May 2020, 86% could recall advertising providing information on the ongoing availability of DA services during the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁸ Furthermore, just over 1 in 3 could recall the 'Still Here' campaign specifically, with this recall being higher among female respondents.¹⁸ Amárach Research, the other company to formally evaluate the initiative, conducted two separate surveys regarding public experience of DA during Covid-19 as well as awareness of the 'Still Here' campaign. The first was conducted in April 2020, with the second in June 2020. Similar to the findings of Coyne Research, in April 2020, 85% of 1,710 nationally representative respondents recalled hearing or seeing a recent awareness raising campaign for DA on TV or radio.¹⁹ Furthermore, also consistent with Coyne Research's

²⁰ Coyne Research (2020) *Department of Justice: Still Here campaign evaluation report*. Dublin, Ireland

²¹ Amárach Research (2020) *An Amárach Briefing on behalf of: Saoirse Refuge*. Dublin 24, Ireland

findings, by June 2020, about 1 in 3 could recall the 'Still Here' campaign by name, also with greater recall among females than males (36% versus 26%).¹⁹ In addition to the promotion of frontline services and support services, this campaign further endorsed and promoted Operation Faoiseamh and the Garda response to DA under Covid-19 restrictions.

Notwithstanding the positive findings from the evaluations and stakeholders' perceptions of the 'Still Here' campaign, there are a number of areas which could potentially strengthen or expand the reach of the campaign. As both evaluations utilised samples which were drawn from the general population and did not set out to specifically include more marginalised groups, there was no evaluation undertaken as to how these groups interpreted the national public messaging. In Action 1.100 of the 2nd National Strategy on DSGBV, it was acknowledged that national messaging should be tailored for local delivery, with specific focus on audiences who are marginalised or at higher risk. However, it was perceived by many of the participating stakeholders that the national public messaging did not necessarily reach, or have the same impact on, marginalised groups. This disparity in reach led to grassroots organisations creating their own content and messaging to ensure these groups were included in communications about DA information and supports during the pandemic, frequently utilising these services' limited resources.

For instance, a grassroots Traveller organisation reported that they created their own series of videos²² to ensure that Traveller women were aware that their services were 'still here' and operational throughout the pandemic, as they had been informed by DA services that there had been a decrease in Traveller women presenting to their services early in the pandemic. It was noted that Traveller women had less access to information about changes than other communities; for example, there was confusion about what was permitted under the public health guidelines²³. Following the videos being released on social media, the source cited anecdotal reports that the number of Traveller women accessing the services had increased, suggesting this approach had reached this group. Additionally, complementary videos aimed at Traveller men conveyed the message that any form of control or

²² See Appendix 1

²³ <https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/COVIDREPORTWEB.pdf>

violence against women was unacceptable: "It's Never OK".²⁴ These videos featured prominent Traveller men to convey this message and were reported by contributors to be effective in reaching their community. One of these videos achieved a reach of 5,200 viewings²⁵. There was also an article about these videos featured in the *Irish Examiner* newspaper entitled '*Traveller men speak out against domestic abuse during lockdown*'²⁶. Social media emerged as fundamental in the approaches which aimed to reach these minority groups; in particular those from the Traveller community and those whose first language was not English. This included sharing videos over social media or posting content on dedicated social media forums on an ongoing basis. With specific reference to the Traveller community, the importance of face-to-face messaging or messaging delivered by other members of the community was highlighted through consultations with a number of Traveller organisations. Similarly, the use of community champions to deliver messaging was emphasised by migrant advocacy and specialist DA services engaging ethnic minorities.

The potential reach of the 'Still Here' campaign may have been restricted by only using English to convey messaging. A DA organisation lead reflected on the importance of targeted information to specific communities in multiple languages and utilising multiple channels of communication. It was reported by an outreach service that works with ethnic minority women that they started a Facebook page at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic to reach all women who might require support. Overall, since the start of the pandemic, the service in question reported a 30% increase in the number of ethnic minority women contacting the service. In light of the complexities of reaching marginalised groups, it was suggested that the development and method of delivery of such messaging should involve organisations who work directly with these groups, with one interviewee stating, '*these are small communities still and, you know, their advocates and their representative groups know where they are*' (Interviewee 3). The same participant also reflected that while a national campaign did need to have a more 'layered' approach to capture diversity in the population, the risk of 'backlash' needed careful consideration. To this end, while the visibility of DA in minority communities is important, backlash could take the form of some communities saying, '*oh great, thanks for shining a spotlight on one of the most negative things that you know and making it about people of colour*

²⁴ See Appendix 1

²⁵ <https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/COVIDREPORTWEB.pdf>

²⁶ <https://www.pressreader.com/ireland/irish-examiner/20200610/281638192439597>

or making it about Traveller people' (Interviewee 3). Interviewee 9 echoed this concern, emphasising that care should be taken to ensure that public messaging *"is all about promoting awareness rather than maybe people feeling that they're being unfairly demonized or picked on"* (Interviewee 9).

Acknowledging the huge benefits of the 'Still Here' campaign, another DA lead organisation reflected that while the intention of a national campaign is to *'convince the largest number of perpetrators and victims of the need for social and behavioural change'* (Interviewee 3), the generalist approach of a national campaign meant that minority groups were not reached. Echoing this sentiment, one Traveller organisation pointed out that this type of approach *'generally only reaches a certain type of person'* and too often there has not been sufficient consideration given to reaching minority groups - e.g. those with disability, LGBTQ or ethnic minorities, etc. A further example highlighted by a leading Traveller Advocacy group was that the new 'No Excuses' campaign advertisement, released in November 2020 (see above), was misunderstood by many in their community, who did not pick up the intended messaging. Additionally, it was highlighted that the settings and scenarios in this series of awareness raising advertisements did not resonate with Traveller women in particular.

Impact

This Case Study established that 'Still Here' was generally perceived very positively. One DA organisational lead described the 'Still Here' campaign as: *'really, really positive, the message that needed to be communicated was communicated'*, specifically making the point that running Operation Faoiseamh simultaneously *'gave it weight'* (Interviewee 7). Similarly, a journalist noted *'an appreciable increase in the amount of reference to DVA'* in print media (Interviewee 9) and that it was *'unquestionably more visible as well on our TV screens, it was being discussed more and people would have become more aware of it'*. These comments reflected an overall sense across the data that this campaign was timely and conveyed important messages, which contributed to a greater societal awareness of DA during this period. A strength of the campaign as stated above, appeared to be its association with An Garda Síochána's response to DA during Covid-19.

The two formal evaluations of the 'Still Here' campaign found that recall was high for

this campaign. Moreover, when measuring impact, Coyne Research (2020)²⁷ reported that 80% of respondents surveyed considered the campaign to be effective for informing people about where to seek support or advice for DA during the Covid-19 pandemic. This figure was found to be even higher among those who had already encountered the campaign (87%) and for female respondents (84%). Additionally, of those surveyed, 62% found the messaging was 'clear', and nearly half of those surveyed (48%) perceived it to be 'realistic'. However, other measurements of impact were harder to ascertain; it was unclear if this enhanced awareness led to increased demand or uptake of services. A senior DA organisation representative indicated that it was not possible to examine increased demand across all DA services, as there was no consistent approach to data collection or collation between member services for female victims of DA²⁸. It also highlighted that not all refuges and services collected information on ethnicity as part of routine data collection, resulting in a paucity of available data on the ethnic backgrounds of those accessing services²⁹. Owing to these gaps in data collection, it was not possible to explore trends in service uptake in relation to the impact of the 'Still Here' campaign among services working with female victims of DA. However, a leading service working with male victims of DA reported increased demand on their service following their inclusion in the 'Still Here' campaign, further noting that they did not receive additional funding to manage the increased demand this created. Overall, the pandemic years have seen an increased demand for their services. In 2021 it was reported that the service engaged with 8,000 male victims of DA. This represented a 30% increase on 2020 figures³⁰. Finally, some Case Study participants were critical of how impact was measured, with one participant reflecting *'we would have been quite challenging of the metrics they used - it's not about hits - public recognition of the ads and recognition of the artist doesn't necessarily mean that it made somebody think, or do, or change the way they would behave, or feel'* (Interviewee 3).

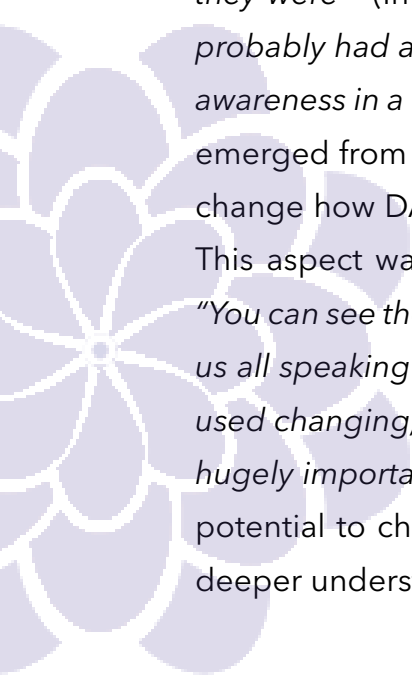
The [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#) highlighted that the prominence of DA and DA services in the media during the pandemic contributed to increased public understanding and empathy for those living with DA. This heightened awareness

²⁷ Coyne Research (2020) *Department of Justice: Still Here campaign evaluation report*. Dublin, Ireland

²⁸ https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/DSGBV_Audit_Report.pdf/Files/DSGBV_Audit_Report.pdf

²⁹ https://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/DSGBV_Audit_Report.pdf/Files/DSGBV_Audit_Report.pdf

³⁰ Pre-pandemic in 2019 Men's Aid reported that they supported 4,528 men through their helpline, outreach, court accompaniment and counselling services (Source: <https://www.mensaid.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Annual-Report-2019.pdf>)




towards DA contributed to the formation of community-based initiatives such as CriTiCall (Community Response Team Call). This community-based collaboration to practically support the victims of DA and relieve pressure on DA services during Covid-19 is explored in detail in the [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#). Community initiatives such as these provided an outlet for the expression of public solidarity, which was substantiated through donations of money, goods and volunteer hours. Volunteer Ireland, which was a partner in the initiative, noted that in addition to the many practical supports provided by CriTiCall it also *“raised grassroots awareness of domestic abuse through the actions of so many volunteers.”*³¹ Another DA Organisation lead reported *“unprecedented level of donations”* during this time, which they attributed to this greater public empathy, explaining that *“people could connect with the experience of feeling controlled and feeling restrained, because they were”* (Interviewee 3). Interviewee 5 reflected that *“[the public messaging] probably had a note that wasn’t there before as far as I’m aware. I think it did raise awareness in a way that hasn’t been there before”*. Another important aspect which emerged from this public messaging and greater awareness was the potential to change how DA was spoken about and the language used in the public domain. This aspect was perceived to be important by Interviewee 7 who commented: *“You can see the language has already begun to change and I think that’s to do with us all speaking out very strongly over the last year. So you can see the vocabulary used changing, it’s becoming more subtle and nuanced and more accurate. That’s hugely important”* (Interviewee 7). Increased levels of public awareness have the potential to change how DA is perceived by wider society, as well as creating a deeper understanding of the support required by victims of DA.

Barriers to impact

The most substantial barrier identified to conveying the public national messaging on DA was language. The decision to communicate national messaging and information only in English, unintentionally excluded many minority groups who either did not speak English, or whose first language was not English. This was compared by one participant to public health messaging which involved publishing

³¹ <https://www.volunteer.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Volunteer-Ireland-Storybook-Online-FINAL.pdf>



'the HSE winter plan in different languages', concluding that there must be a better way of delivering awareness raising, or doing something that would *'transcend those barriers'* without some communities feeling as if they were being singled out.

Additionally, concerns were highlighted that minority groups may not have even encountered the public messaging because of the mediums used to communicate this message (radio, tv, website). One service emphasised that if you cannot speak or do not understand the language to a basic degree of proficiency, you will most likely not be exposed to these media channels. Interviewee 3 reflected that *'it's one thing producing something. But then it's another thing about, where are these people and are they going to be watching the telly or do they have access to this?'* Similarly, one Traveller organisation noted that the time slots of the advertisements were not ideal for optimal reach for this community. It was noted that directing people to click a link to the website for all information infers that all people have access to technology or to the internet and are capable of understanding such information, which may not be the case for some groups.

An issue with any awareness raising approach that fails to acknowledge the diversity of its audience is highlighted by Heisecke (2014: 20) who notes that national campaigns targeting messages at the general public deliver general messages collectively to what are in reality many diverse groups within any given society. Therefore, the design of awareness raising campaigns needs to ensure that the messages are specifically designed to *'reach - and to be heard by - the people that need to hear them'* (Ibid: 20). Heisecke's assertion takes on a particular importance when we consider the evidence from the [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#), which suggested that minority ethnic groups either felt DA messages were not clear for their group, or that lack of representation made the messaging less effective for some groups.

Recommendations for future campaigns

Although the DA sector was consulted during the development of 'Still Here' campaign, findings from the [Dahlia-19 Irish Mapping Study](#) and this Case Study suggest that planning for future messaging should include consultation with more a wider range of groups. A DA organisation lead highlighted, that despite their involvement, the approach taken for the 'Still Here' campaign came from the top

down; "... they [Department of Justice] were very much about top level, much more homogeneous. There was no like layers to it. It was going to be one digital video - one" (Interviewee 3). Nonetheless, this participant reflected that they were pleased with the content at the time: "They wanted to get it done quite fast. They had the budget, but they did come back to us, particularly on the primary ad was the [video chat] and we all really liked it" (Interviewee 3).

The need to develop targeted approaches to awareness raising and messaging for more marginalised groups was highlighted by most of the representatives approached on this topic. Furthermore, it was recommended that these targeted approaches should be developed in consultation with those working with these communities as they know what will work for their clients. A leading NGO service working with male victims of DA commented that websites are crucial mediums for conveying messaging to men who favour websites over helplines for initial contact and information. A specialist DA service working with migrant women similarly noted that messaging needs to be positioned in a space where it can 'catch someone's eye' and equally importantly it needs to be in an individual's first language. The lead for an organisation working with LGBTQ adolescents and young adults highlighted that, if campaigns "do not use inclusive language or if imagery is of hetro-couples then LGBT community can just shut off as it has no relevance for them". As stated earlier, many of the groups who undertook alternative approaches to reach their clients, did so without any additional funding or support from government agencies. As such, dedicated ring-fenced state funding for the alternative targeted messaging to support national campaigns was highlighted as an important next step by participants. In arguing for support for local ringfenced funding to conduct targeted bespoke campaigns, Interviewee 7 commented: 'they want and need resources to develop to respond to more vulnerable communities and to have the capacity to respond to the way in which domestic violence presents. The word is intersectionality, but the way in which it presents is quite nuanced and we need capacity and resources to respond to that'.

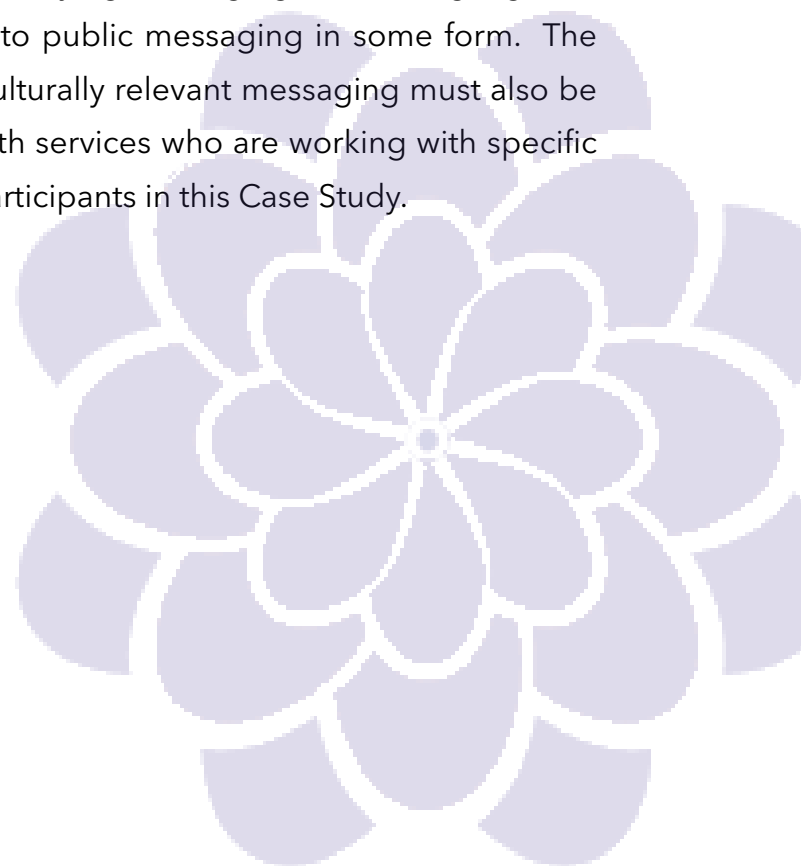
In a parliamentary (Dáil) speech regarding the new Strategy on DSGBV, the Minister for Justice noted that "solutions will not come from legislation alone, nor can we tackle DSGBV by treating it simply as a criminal justice issue. What is required is societal and cultural change". Raising the public's awareness of an issue is often

seen as being a catalyst for effecting change. As reflected in the literature and policy material developed internationally (Heisecke: 2014: 8), public awareness is one part of a complex approach to prevention which incorporates education, training and awareness. Interviewee 7 identified a risk of prevention being reduced to a reliance on an awareness raising campaign, stating *'awareness raising is just an ad[vertisement] that is designed to catch your attention in a fleeting moment for an immediate response. It is not a deep and sustained response'*. Converging thoughts on this issue were expressed by Interviewee 3 who argued for real *'investment in structural change'* and Interviewee 7 who articulated the need for *'really deep understanding of the dynamics that govern our world'*. Arguing for the need to make DA more widely discussed, this participant concluded *'I think if we gained the language to speak about these things, we will absolutely revolutionize how we speak about this'*. More robust evaluation of awareness raising campaigns that explores impact on behaviour and understanding of DA, rather than simply evaluating the general population's recall of public messaging, is required. With the 3rd National Strategy on DSGBV due for publication in the first half of 2022, this study demonstrates the value of establishing from the outset more specific or meaningful measurements for impact of messaging. This approach would ensure that those who most need to hear messages are actually exposed to it.

Conclusion

Both national awareness raising campaigns and grassroots-led awareness and messaging initiatives have the potential to be developed and adapted for different audiences and geographic locations. Overwhelmingly, the stakeholders in this research study perceived national awareness raising as being central to the increased attention DA received throughout the Covid-19 pandemic in Ireland. The recent homicide of Aisling Murphy has hardened the resolve to challenge VAW at a political level. On referring to the forthcoming 3rd National Strategy on DSGBV, the Minister for Justice stated that *"Its goal is clear: zero tolerance of violence and abuse against women. To prevent violence and abuse against women, we must eradicate the social and cultural attitudes which make women feel unsafe. We can only do so by changing our culture to ensure we are not all bystanders"*. Awareness raising activities are but one small part of this process of change.

The 'Still Here' campaign aimed to address two main issues relating to DA under Covid-19; the campaign encouraged victims to seek help rather than remain in unsafe situations, thereby preventing ongoing violence and abuse during the pandemic. Moreover, the campaign focused on informing victims of DA that services and supports were available and accessible irrespective of Covid-19 containment measures. However, ultimately the 'Still Here' campaign achieved more than this. The data has shown that the 'Still Here' campaign was perceived to be central in the opening up of a national conversation about DA and generating public empathy, which in turn was translated into a clear display of solidarity with victims and an expression of public consensus about a zero tolerance approach to DA. This Case Study has shown that there is potential to develop the reach and impact of public awareness messaging through collaboration and consultation with specialist services who engage with marginalised groups that are also known to be at higher risk of DA. There could be merit in exploring a more holistic approach to Action 1.100 of the 2nd National Strategy on DSGBV's aim for 'Prevention' of DA, which better integrates the three prevention elements of education, training and awareness. Learning which can be drawn from this Case Study includes the value of acknowledging the importance of conveying messaging in first languages to ensure that all groups will be exposed to public messaging in some form. The importance of culturally sensitive and culturally relevant messaging must also be considered. To this end, consultation with services who are working with specific groups was strongly endorsed by the participants in this Case Study.



Appendix 1:

Pavee Point: 'Still Here' video messaging for Traveller and Roma communities

Date	Traveller women's "Still Here" video links - Organisation / Service and speaker
03/05/20	Women's Aid; CEO Sarah Benson
03/05/20	Dublin Rape Crisis; CEO Noreen Blackwell
03/02/21	Adapt Services and Refuge (public health measures in refuge under Covid-19)
10/03/21	Aoibhneas Refuge (outlining admission policies and procedures under Covid)
18/03/21	Aoibhneas Outreach (outlining how the service operates)
20/03/21	Aoibhneas Refuge (explaining Staff members in the Refuge and their various roles)

Pavee Point: (Domestic Violence) 'It's Never Ok'. Preventative engagement with Traveller men through video messaging

Date	"It's Never OK" video links - Topic and speaker
08/06/20	Financial Abuse (Martin Reilly, Men's Health)
09/06/20	DA, drugs and alcohol (John Paul Collins, Community Development Worker)
10/06/20	Men's role in combatting VAW (John Connors, Actor)
11/06/20	Family Violence and intimate partner violence (Michael Collins, Men's Health)
12/06/20	Forms of abuse (Martin Collins, Co-Director Pavee Point)

