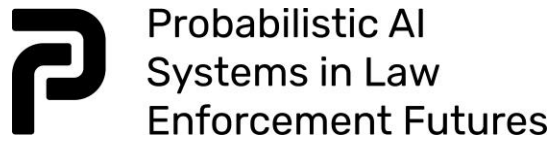


Responsible AI for Policing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) – Women’s Perspectives



Policy Brief: October 2026

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Key insights

- AI used in VAWG-related policing should primarily support rather than replace human judgement. Greater caution is required as AI moves from assisting officers towards predicting outcomes or influencing decisions about victims.
- Women’s stories show that victim-blaming and discriminatory treatment during police interactions can make reporting VAWG more difficult and hinder effective and proactive responses.
- Women see potential for AI to improve police response to VAWG cases, particularly by supporting victim interviews, reviewing information and reducing administrative delays.
- The use of AI should not substitute investment in better policing practice. Officer training, meaningful human oversight and continuous monitoring of AI systems remain important.
- Where a system is unable to identify an individual, overlooking other observable characteristics such as gait could leave the victim at risk. Human review of footage may provide important contextual information that automated systems could miss.

Introduction

Violence against women and girls (VAWG), including domestic abuse, stalking, rape, harassment, murder, coercive control and honour-based abuse, represents almost 20% of all police-recorded crime in England and Wales.¹ Men and boys also experience many of these forms of violence but they affect women at a higher rate.¹ In the year ending 2025, police records show that 72.1% of domestic abuse-related crimes were against women, compared with 27% of domestic abuse-related crimes against male victims.² This gendered pattern of victimisation is particularly important as AI and other technologies become increasingly embedded within policing, creating opportunities to enhance the prevention and investigation of VAWG, while also introducing new risks. How AI is designed, procured and used in policing therefore has implications for victims' safety, access to justice and confidence in the criminal justice system. The challenge for policymakers is to identify

¹ “Violence Against Women and Girls,” n.d., <https://www.npcc.police.uk/our-work/violence-against-women-and-girls/>.

² Ons Centre for Crime And Justice. “Domestic Abuse Victim Characteristics, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics,” November 26, 2025. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/domesticabusevictimcharacteristicsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2025>.

where AI can improve the police response to VAWG while ensuring that technology does not replace the professional judgement, sensitivity and human interaction required in cases involving vulnerable victims.

Where should AI be used in VAWG policing?

Participants' views varied in accordance with the potential consequences of AI use and the level of autonomy given to the technology. They were more comfortable with AI that assists or supports officers in low-risk tasks and less comfortable with those that make decisions that affect people directly. The findings therefore suggest that the further AI moves from supporting police officers towards making decisions, the greater the need for human judgement, effective oversight, transparency and meaningful opportunities to challenge decisions. For participants, AI's Role should be to support not replace human decisions that affect people's safety, rights and lives.

Facilitate	Assist	Recommend	Predict	Decide
Using AI to transcribe victim statements.	AI for sending emails, going over information.	AI suggesting lines of enquiry for police consideration.	AI determining crime hotspots.	AI strongly influencing important decisions about victims.

Generally more acceptable  Generally less acceptable

The further right on this spectrum, the greater the concern and need for critical human judgement.

What are women saying about AI and technology in VAWG policing?

Women's perspectives do not suggest that AI should replace existing policing practices. Instead, their perspectives and stories suggest that when AI is used in policing, careful consideration should be given to its potential impact on victims and the level of human judgement needed for each situation. Rather than replacing human decision-making, women's accounts highlight the potential for AI to support policing while remaining responsive to victims' experiences and circumstances.

AI could support victim interviews

Women's stories show how experiences of victim-blaming and discriminatory questioning can influence their openness towards AI-supported interviewing. For some women, these experiences suggest that AI could potentially provide greater consistency in questioning and reduce some of the interpersonal dynamics that may make victims reluctant to disclose their experiences.

I feel like AI can help because some job interviews now use AI as an interface to remove biases, discrimination or favouritism. So, you get to interact with AI, you get to do your interview with AI. So maybe in woman A's case, if she had complained to AI, it won't detect where she is from.

- Ethnic minority woman

Another ethnic minority woman reflected on inappropriate questioning when a woman reports feeling unsafe.

It is very inappropriate for someone who has called to report that they feel unsafe to be asked if they are attracted to their abuser... If there is an AI tool that helps to handle the questioning it would be helpful to avoid this kind of bias because to be honest, with human beings you cannot erase bias.

- Ethnic minority woman

These narratives show how AI is being imagined as a possible safeguard against victim blaming, discriminatory questioning and gaps in human-led interviews. This is a perception of potential rather than evidence that AI is inherently less biased than human interviewers. AI systems can reproduce and amplify existing human biases, potentially reinforcing discriminatory attitudes and outcomes for underrepresented groups.³ This highlights the importance of ensuring that AI systems used in policing are carefully tested and continuously monitored.

AI could therefore have an assistive rather than replacement role, for example by suggesting trauma-informed questions, identifying gaps in questioning, highlighting relevant lines of enquiry or flagging potentially inappropriate or discriminatory questions. Responsibility for interpreting these suggestions and deciding whether and how they should be used should remain with the officer, ensuring that AI supports rather than replaces professional judgement, contextual understanding and meaningful engagement with the victims.

AI could reduce delays in VAWG cases

Delays in identifying relevant information, assessing risk or progressing cases may affect victim support and timely intervention. This may have wider implications for victim safety and confidence in the criminal justice system. Women also identified the potential for AI to reduce administrative delays, allowing officers to focus additional time on victims and supporting more timely resolution of their cases.

Having to go through hours and hours, you know, the long-winded process of manually looking at these statements, documents. AI will probably bring all this information together, all of this data, all the statistics in one place. And it just reduces the amount of time that is spent on this case. And it means that the alleged victim's case can be dealt with a lot quicker, a lot sooner, so it's not a waiting game.

- Ethnic minority woman

³ Moshe Glickman and Tali Sharot, "How human-AI Feedback Loops Alter Human Perceptual, Emotional and Social Judgements," *Nature Human Behaviour* 9, no. 2 (December 18, 2024): 345–59, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-024-02077-2>.

This supports the use of AI for high-volume administrative activities. Potential applications include systems that retrieve and summarise relevant information from case files, assist with document review and identify potential lines of enquiry. These uses also raise a wider policy question about whether appropriately governed AI could support police in managing high volumes of information associated with disclosure processes such as Clare's Law.

For VAWG cases, where delays can affect access to protection, support and justice, these uses may help officers progress cases more efficiently. However, speed should not be the only priority. VAWG cases often involve complex circumstances and intersecting vulnerabilities that require professional judgement and sensitivity to victims' individual experience. AI should therefore be used to create more capacity for effective victim support, rather than simply to speed up the resolution of victims' cases without addressing the quality of the response.

Surveillance could improve public safety

Women's experiences also highlight the importance of technology in identifying perpetrators of VAWG and gathering evidence. One woman who had experienced physical assault described her frustration with the police response to repeated incidents despite the availability of footage from privately-owned CCTV cameras.

And this neighbour has been breaking our car, breaking our window, coming out, attacking me, coming for me anyway. And the way I see the police handling it, it's really bad. It's like I came here to this country thinking that it's safe...It's been like 5 cases and all of them nothing [was done] they see the CCTV but they can't recognise his face. The guy, you can literally recognise him from his walk, from his clothes. He has got problem in his legs, so you can't recognise him?

- Female Physical assault victim

This narrative highlights the risk of relying too heavily on automated identification. Where a system is unable to identify an individual, overlooking other observable characteristics such as gait could leave the victim at risk. Human review of footage may provide important contextual information that automated systems could miss. It also highlights the importance of ensuring that automated identification (or inability to identify via facial recognition) is not treated as a definitive assessment where other available evidence or methods of investigation (including non-technical) may provide relevant information.

The woman further expressed a preference for more police-owned CCTV cameras in public spaces. There was a shared concern among the women that privately owned camera footage may not always be available or accessible when needed, particularly where individuals are unwilling to share them with the police or when they forget to charge the device.

I've been begging for more CCTV. And not to be like people's own, like owned by the police. Something for the community not just one person because they can be friends so of course, he is not going to give in [to police request to see footage] ... It has been over five cases, and this guy is known for different things. He is known by another lady, he attacked her.

- Female Physical assault victim

From this perspective, police-owned CCTV was seen as a way of improving timely access to relevant footage and supporting the identification of VAWG perpetrators. However, police use of surveillance technologies should be proportionate and accompanied by careful consideration of privacy, necessity and the potential risks for victims and the wider public. The women's perspectives therefore point to both the potential value of greater access to surveillance footage and the need for appropriate safeguards around its collection.

Emotion Recognition

Women also considered whether AI could identify signs of risk or distress that may not be explicitly communicated by a victim. For example, one woman discussed the possibility of AI using voice features to identify if a woman is safe when calling the police.

If there's an AI tool that is able to detect when a woman is calling or even when anybody is calling, actually, to be able to detect if that person is safe or not, just from the sound of their voice, the undertone, and also the kind of information that they are sharing.

- Female participant

This narrative shows a perception that AI may be useful in identifying signs of distress that may otherwise be missed but such AI use should be approached cautiously. Inferring a person's emotional state or level of risk from characteristics such as voice may be affected by factors including accent, disability, and communication styles. Such inferences must be guided by professional judgement and should not be treated as definitive indicators of risk or distress.

Key safeguards for AI in VAWG policing

The findings suggest five safeguards that should be considered in the responsible use of AI in VAWG policing. They reflect the need for AI systems that support effective policing while protecting victims, maintaining human judgement and reducing harm.

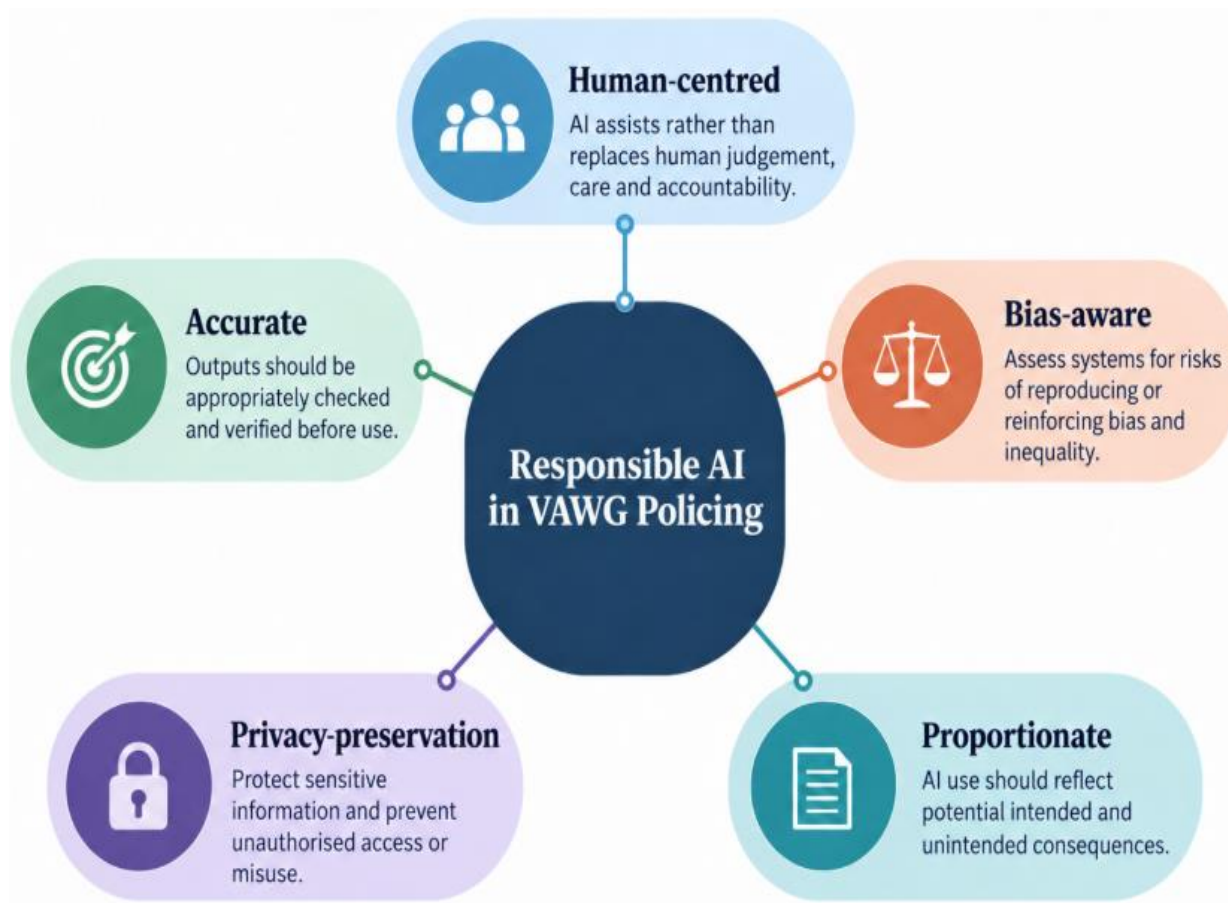


Figure 1. Key safeguards for AI in VAWG policing

These principles offer a practical basis for assessing the suitability of AI tools in VAWG-related policing. They can also help policymakers and police forces identify where safeguards are needed before AI is introduced or deployed.

Policy recommendations

Prioritise AI for high-volume, low-risk tasks

Police forces should prioritise AI applications that facilitate or assist high-volume, low-risk administrative tasks. There was support for investing in AI systems that help officers perform low-risk tasks such as managing emails, scheduling, reviewing documents and retrieving information. In VAWG cases, the purpose of these systems should be to reduce avoidable delays and create greater capacity for officers to provide effective support to victims.

Use AI as an assistive tool in high-stakes VAWG processes

In performing high-stakes policing processes, such as conducting victim interviews, AI tools can serve in an assistive capacity. For instance, AI systems can support officers in conducting more effective victim interviews, highlighting relevant lines of enquiry, and identifying gaps in questioning. Responsibility for evaluating AI suggestions, interpreting the circumstances of a victim and making consequential decisions should remain with appropriately trained professionals.

Use alternative identification methods cautiously where facial recognition is unsuitable

Police forces should consider alternative identification methods where facial recognition is unreliable or inappropriate. This may include other forms of biometric or behavioural analysis such as gait recognition. However, forces must assess their reliability, potential for bias, privacy implications and proportionality, particularly for underrepresented groups who may be disproportionately affected. AI-supported identification should also be combined with other available evidence and should not be treated as definitive in isolation.

Make meaningful human oversight a requirement

Officers must be able to question, override and disregard AI outputs where those outputs could affect victims, suspects or decisions about case progression. Officers must retain the capacity, knowledge and authority to assess whether an AI output is appropriate for the individual victim and circumstances. AI should support and not substitute for professional judgement.

Strengthen officer training alongside investment in AI

Women's optimism about AI is partly connected to experiences and perceptions of human bias in policing. Investment in technology must therefore be accompanied by continued investment in officers. Training should address victim-blaming, discriminatory practices, trauma-informed responses and the ways intersecting factors such as race, immigration status, language and vulnerability can shape police encounters. The effectiveness of this training should also be properly evaluated rather than measured primarily through completion rates.

Continuously monitor AI systems for bias, accuracy and unintended harm

AI systems used in VAWG policing should be assessed for accuracy, bias and potential unintended consequences before deployment and monitored after implementation. This is particularly important where AI systems are trained on historical policing data or are used to support decisions affecting victims, as existing biases may be reproduced through technology. Monitoring should continue throughout the system's use, rather than being treated as a one-off assessment before deployment.

What this means for policymakers

The findings do not point towards widespread adoption or rejection of AI in VAWG policing. Instead, they suggest that the value and acceptability of AI depend on how it is used and the consequences of its use. Participants' levels of comfort were generally higher with AI that assists low-risk tasks and lower where AI predicts, decides or strongly influences decisions affecting people.

For policymakers, this suggests that the focus should be on establishing clear boundaries around AI use: where it can improve efficiency by supporting officers, where human judgement must remain central, and what safeguards are required to protect victims. AI should therefore be developed and deployed in ways that improve the police response to VAWG without compromising victim safety, privacy, dignity or confidence in the criminal justice system.

Declaration

This policy brief was developed and authored by members of the PROBabLE Futures project team. The findings, participant perspectives, analysis and policy recommendations are based on human-generated research data and interpretation by the project team. Claude (an AI assistant developed by Anthropic) was used to support the refinement and restructuring of some sentences while Chat GPT was used to generate the images in the policy brief. The final content has been reviewed, edited and approved by the project team, who remain responsible for its accuracy, interpretation and conclusions.

About the research

This research is part of the PROBable Futures (Probabilistic AI Systems in Law Enforcement Futures) which is a four-year, £3.4M RAI funded Keystone Project led by Northumbria University with Glasgow, Northampton, Leicester, Newcastle and Cambridge Universities.

Our project, working alongside our law enforcement, third sector and commercial partners, is developing a framework to understand the implications of uncertainty and to build confidence in future Probabilistic AI in law enforcement, with the interests of justice and responsibility at its heart. Activities include mapping the AI ecosystem in law enforcement, including the use of large language models; developing guidance, checklist and frameworks to guide assessment of scientific and legal validity, and mock trials with AI outputs as evidence.

Across the wider project, storytelling sessions were conducted to explore how people from groups potentially affected by the adoption of AI in law enforcement understand its opportunities, risks and limitations. Participants included women (n=9), care leavers (n=7), people living with mental health challenges (n=2), and people from ethnic minority backgrounds (n=13). Storytelling empowers participants to construct their own narratives and interpret the significance of various moments in their lives.⁴

PROBable Futures is supported by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council [Grant Number EP/Y009800/1 AI KP0003] through funding from Responsible AI UK

For more information about the project, scan the QR code or email probablefutures@northumbria.ac.uk



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⁴ Gender at Work (G@W) and The Story Kitchen (TSK), “Our Stories, Our Voices: Storytelling to Understand Social Norm Changes” (UN Women Nepal and Government of Finland) <<https://genderatwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/LB1-Interactive-Our-stories-our-voices.pdf>>