

**Written evidence submitted by the  
'Gender and Internet of Things' Research Team  
University College London (UCL)**

The Implications of the Internet of Things (IoT) on Victims of Gender-  
Based Domestic Violence and Abuse (G-IoT)

*A 2017-18 Social Science Plus Pilot Project*

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## Introduction

based on recent research we have conducted into how the Internet of Things (IoT) might impact on gender-based domestic violence and abuse and what measures will be needed in order to mitigate against those risks.

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unique and potentially unforeseen means to *exacerbate* manipulate and dominate (for example, remote control of heating, lights, locks), as highlighted most recently in instances where a husband used a smart-home device to spy on his wife.<sup>1</sup> Or where the internet-

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While IoT usage is not yet widespread (7.5bn total connections worldwide in 2017), it is expected to increase to 25.1bn connections globally by 2025.<sup>3</sup> This expansion legislators who hope to prepare for these societal and technical changes.

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impact of have had your email hacked or your whereabouts monitored, or your  
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 into her devices or her mobile or her tablet and extract evidence that is  
 unquestionable so that the police will begin to make prosecutions and, and we  
 will begin to have succ

We therefore encourage the UK government to prioritise tech abuse as a funding area across the whole sector.

We note that there are some examples of statutory services beginning to recognise the need for additional capacity in this area. For example, the Northumbria Police has recently increased its technical capabilities, including establishing a dedicated domestic abuse cyber stalking and harassment team. Approaches like this have to become more widespread to ensure the availability of know-how and specialist help across the UK. The existence of such teams also needs to be effectively communicated to refuges, charitable organisations and frontline workers.

## **2. Ensuring there is an appropriate gender balance in police units dealing with technology**

An observation that derived from our engagement and interactions with statutory and charitable support services is the perceived lack of female officers in the UK police force, especially in units that deal with technology. There is a body of literature

female police officers and the positive effects that female police representatives can have on the response and arrest rates when it comes to gender-based sexual violence.<sup>4</sup>

While our research team has currently no hard evidence to verify nor to make judgements on the effects of such a potential gender-imbalance, we do suggest it would be it would be helpful to review the gender-balance of staffing in areas of domestic violence and tech-abuse.

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<sup>4</sup> Andrews, R., & Miller, K. J. (2013). Representative Bureaucracy, Gender, and Policing: The Case of Domestic Violence Arrests in England. *Public Administration*, 91(4), 998–1014.

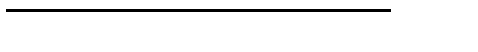
Jordan, J. (2002). Will any woman do?: Police, gender and rape victims. *Policing: An International Journal*, 25(2), 319–344.

Meier, K. J., & Nicholson-Crotty, J. (2006). Gender, Representative Bureaucracy, and Law Enforcement: The Case of Sexual Assault. *Public Administration Review*, 66(6), 850–860.

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to give to  
tampering.

To address this gap, we consider it essential that the UK government ensures that there is dynamic guidance set in place where frontline workers, support services as





## About our research

I am answering this call in my role as Principal Investigator for the ongoing (G-IoT) research project.<sup>8</sup> G-IoT is an interdisciplinary study exploring the implications of Internet of Things (IoT) on gender-

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