

What are the dangers of female perpetrated stalking – how is this reflected in policing practices, policies and preventive methods?

Research aiming to analyse the prevalence of female stalkers, the underlying causes of this phenomenon and whether police are implementing procedures to prevent it.

Key details

Lead institution	Goldsmiths, University of London
Principal researcher(s)	Emily Ripley eripl001@campus.goldsmiths.ac.uk
Police region	London
Level of research	Masters
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Research context

The purpose of this research is to determine the prevalence of stalking by women, the underlying factors and behaviours within female perpetrated stalking (FPS) and whether practices, policies and preventive strategies are being implemented by British police to prevent and understand this phenomenon.

Four main points will be evaluated in this research.

1. The risk: the contribution of psychopathologies and stalking strategies by FPS.
2. Policing practices and procedures: are police responding to FPS occurrences efficiently, arresting suspects and demonstrating the same practices regardless of the perpetrator gender.

3. Safeguarding the victim: are police implementing preventive measures such as stalking protection orders (SPOs), protection from harassment or referring the suspects to external agencies for support.
4. Do policies acknowledge the prevalence and seriousness of FPS and is this reflected in police training.

Problem

There is a noticeable paucity of research on female stalkers. While accurate data remains difficult to collect, it is estimated that female offenders represent approximately 17–26% of stalking instances (Lamplugh 2016, 2018) and female stalkers have an estimated reoffending rate of 57% (Brooks and others 2021).

It is widely recognised that female perpetrated stalking is not perceived as seriously as male perpetrated stalking, nor is it thought to be treated equally by police or reported at the same rate by victims. Despite the limited research, certain findings highlight that female stalkers are more likely to use moderate violence against their victims than male suspects, and they are equally likely to use extreme violence (Thompson and others 2012). Highlighting the need for better preventive measures to safeguard the victims, changing perceptions of investigating officers and overall research identifying the underlying factors that could prevent (re)offending.

The research aims to add to the limited research on stalking by female perpetrators, highlight the dangers and to reflect on current British policing standards.

Research methodology

Research questions

1. Which psychological and individual factors best predict female perpetrated stalking
2. What typologies are mostly associated with female perpetrated stalking
3. Are female stalkers dangerous? And what type of risk do they pose?
4. Do risk assessments adequately identify these risks?
5. Do practices and policies reflect the dangers that female stalking present

6. Are preventative measures being applied for (SPO's, protection against harassment and/ or mental health referrals)

Research design

This research aims to use a qualitative design to thematically analyse all occurrences of female perpetrated stalking in 2024. Using the Police Database to extract data and apply a variety of analytical tools to analyse behavioural patterns, identify typologies, and review practices, drawing upon thematic and discursive analysis. The data will be coded to align with the four main points this research aims to understand: psychopathology, practices, policy and prevention.

The research is intended to provide an in-depth analysis of patterns, themes and insights on the psychopathology and typologies of female stalkers, policing procedures and how the police are safeguarding victims.

Limitations

- The nature of the study makes the research difficult to replicate, and the findings may not be generalisable.
- The research relies on accurate and reliable police data. The case files may be incomplete or contain biased information.

References

1. Brooks N and others. 2021. '[Understanding female-perpetrated stalking](#)'. Journal of Threat Assessment and Management, 8(3), pp 65–76.
2. Suzy Lamplugh Trust. 2016, June 28. Suzy Lamplugh Trust. <https://www.suzylamplugh.org/>
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4. Thompson CM, Dennison SM and Stewart A. 2012. '[Are female stalkers more violent than male stalkers? Understanding gender differences in stalking violence using contemporary sociocultural beliefs](#)'. Sex Roles, 66(5–6), pp 351–365.