Victim support helpline receiving 17 domestic abuse-related calls a day

Between November 2014 and December 2015, the APAV victim support helpline took an average of 17 calls a day, the majority of them relating to situations of physical and psychological abuse within a context of domestic violence.

During the aforementioned period the Portuguese Association for Victim Support’s (APAV) helpline service took 3,819 phone calls and opened 2,303 new proceedings for support. This is according to statistics from the association released this week to mark European Day for Victims of Crime.

Crimes against people spurred the vast majority of the calls (95.1 percent of the phone calls), more than half of which (66.4 percent) related to physical and psychological abuse within a context of domestic violence, 3.7 percent denounced situations of threats and coercion, and 3.1 percent for bodily harm. Cases of stalking and bullying were behind 1.9 percent and 1.1 percent of phone calls respectively, while property damage and theft were responsible for 1.4 percent and 0.4 percent of calls, respectively.

On average each phone call lasted around 13.5 minutes.

Given that 1,973 victims of crimes were registered during the above-mentioned timeframe, APAV traced a profile of both the victims and the aggressors. The majority of victims were female, with an average age of 46, married or living with a partner and just over half (51 percent) had children at home. A large percentage of female victims (47 percent) had a degree and 43 percent were employed. Of the 310 cases in which the victim was male, APAV established that they were aged around 44, close to half (46 percent) were married or living with their partner, and 44 percent had children still living in the home.

Almost 49 percent of the men had only secondary schooling, and 31.5 percent were employed. Regarding the 103 children and youngsters who were the victims of crime, the majority (60 percent) were girls aged around 11, and regarding the elderly, who represented 286 cases, 81 percent of the victims were female and aged around 77.

Launched on 17 November 2014 the helpline - which uses the same number as the European victim helpline, 116 006 - works as part of a network with judicial and police authorities. It affords a swifter channeling of victims to competent authorities.

The project aimed to "create at a national level, an integrated system that allows the efficient screening and an adjusted response to the needs of victims", their families and friends.

To mark European Day for Victims of Crime and promote the APAV victim support helpline, the association launched an awareness campaign with the theme 'Violence lurks in silence.'

European Day for Victims of Crime was established by Victim Support Europe to reiterate the rights of crime victims.