

Forms and dynamics of domestic violence

Factsheet

“Domestic violence is more than being beaten up, it’s more than not allowing you to see your friends; not allowing you your own money; it’s controlling your life in every possible way; no one can see it.”

Definition of domestic violence



Domestic violence (DV), also called “domestic abuse” is defined by the United Nations as a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and exert control over an individual within a family or household.

It can occur between couples, same sex couples, parent and child, siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents or even roommates. Violence can include physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person in a negative way.

Definition of intimate partner violence



Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, economic, social or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.

An intimate relationship may refer to a victims’ current or previous partner, spouse, living companion, or dating partner, regardless if they are living together in the same household or not. Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women and occurs in all settings and among all socioeconomic, religious, and cultural groups. However, intimate partner violence against males can occur as well and is significantly being underreported.

Victims of domestic violence

Victims of domestic violence come from all social, cultural, economic, and religious backgrounds with different age, gender and sexual orientation, including people with disabilities. It is important to understand, that there is NO “typical victim”.



Find more information on **victims** [here](#).

Most common forms of violence



Click [here](#) for an explanation video on **gaslighting**.



Click [here](#) for an explanation video on **coercive control**.



Find more information in [Module 1](#).

Physical violence
Threatening and/or using physical force that causes bodily harm, injury, or pain to an individual

Perpetrator(s): individual or a group

Some examples: Beating, burning, biting, use of weapons, locking the victim in the house, or neglecting.

Sexual violence
Any kind of sexual activity or act that took place without consent, the use of coercion, or because of their level of development/mental state.

Perpetrator(s): regardless of their relationship with the victim, in any setting

Some examples: Pressuring, forcing, or tricking victims into having sex, sexual assault, rape and made to penetrate.

Psychological violence
(=emotional/mental violence) Intentional use of psychological tactics by one individual to exert control, manipulate, intimidate, or inflict emotional harm on the other partner (most common forms: stalking and coercive control)

Some examples: Intimidation, threats, isolation or confinement, threatening to self-harm, extreme jealousy, controlling behaviours.

Coercive control (Psychological violence)

Isolating victims, controlling their daily life, and restricting communication.

Some examples: Gaslighting, using children as a tool for manipulation, and controlling the victim's phone calls, texts, and online activities.

Reproductive coercion limits a woman's autonomy in reproductive decisions, including birth control sabotage, pregnancy coercion, or controlling pregnancy outcomes.

Economic violence
Any act or behaviour which causes economic harm to an individual.

Some examples: Restricting access to financial resources, education or the labour market, or manipulating the victim to sign financial contracts.

Stalking
A wilful repeated unwanted contact, pursuit, physical intrusion, observation, restraint in places where the victim moves or other form of unwanted intrusion into the victim's life.

Some examples: Following or surveillance at work or residence, inappropriate approaches and confrontations, engaging in online monitoring and harassment.



Neglect

Abandonment of the due care of the victim, which is needed due to illness, disability, age, developmental or other personal circumstances.

Some examples: Failing to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care for the victim or their children.



Digital violence

(=cyberviolence) Use of the internet to harm, harass or humiliate the victim on social media, email, online forums, blogs or other interactive websites or apps.

Some examples: Cyberstalking, posting content without consent, sextortion, non-consensual pornography (=revenge porn).

Special types of violence

Child, early and forced marriage



Child marriage is when at least one of the parties is a child (younger than 18 years – in some regions younger than 16 years).

Early marriages involve a person aged below 18 or marriages where both spouses are 18 or older but other factors make them unready to consent to marriage, e.g., their level of physical, emotional, sexual, and psychosocial development.

Forced marriage is any marriage which occurs without the full and free consent of one or both of the parties, where one or both of the parties is/are unable to end or leave the marriage, or as a result of duress or intense social or family pressure.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)

FGM/C (=female circumcision) is a severe breach of human rights, violating the right to physiological and psychological integrity. It intentionally alters or injures the female external genitalia for non-medical reasons and is mostly performed against the will of the woman or girl. FGM/C is a worldwide issue, which also exists in Europe. It is estimated that 190,000 girls and women in 17 European countries are at risk of being mutilated and that over 600,000 women in Europe are living with the consequences of FGM/C.

Sexual exploitation/forced prostitution

The term 'sexual exploitation' means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Some types of 'forced prostitution' can also fall under this category.



Click [here](#) for an explanation video on FGM/C.



Find more information about **femicide** on the [UNODC Report](#).

Honour-related violence

Honour-related violence describes any form of physical psychological or other forms of violence that is carried out within the family or the community in the name of ‘family honour’. It is important to note that also men, boys and persons identifying themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or transsexual may experience honour related violence and psychological pressure. Honour-related violence is collective violence. Although an individual community member would not approve of the community norms, it may be extremely hard for the individual to challenge them.

Femicide: Gender-related killings of women and girls

Femicide (=femicide) is defined as the killing of women and girls because of their gender. 56% of victims of femicide are killed by their current and former partners, or family members such as fathers, brothers, mothers, sisters because of their role and status as women.

Parent abuse by child and adolescents (CAPVA)

Child and Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (CAPVA) describes a dynamic in which a young person (aged 8-18 years) engages in abusive behavior toward a parent or adult caregiver and in which the abusive behavior is harmful and repeated. This abuse may be physical, verbal, financial, coercive or emotional and may include behaviours such as hitting, making threats, scaring them into doing or not doing things, or causing damage in the home.

CAPVA often presents as a gendered form of abuse, with the majority of cases which are known to services taking place between boys in late adolescence and their mothers.

Helpful sources

They can be found [here](#).

1. Image by [Luisella Planeta](#) on [Pixabay](#)
2. Image by [rawpixel.com](#) on [Freepik](#)
3. Image by [Gerd Altmann](#) on [Pixabay](#)
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