

Risk assessment and risk management by police

Principle 1: Prioritising victim safety

Expected result: Police officers are able to conduct risk assessment in a way that protects women's privacy, guarantees confidentiality and provides protection from secondary or repeated victimisation. For the best effect, this should be done in collaboration with other relevant agencies.

Key elements for applying the principle of victim safety in risk assessment

In applying the principle of victim safety in risk assessment, police leadership should ensure the following.

- Identification and assessment of victims' individual safety needs is carried out on a case-by-case basis.
- Risk assessment facilitates women's entry into the victim support system in accordance with national procedures. The type and level of support provided should be determined according to the level of risk and degree of severity identified.
- Police risk assessment recognises the dynamic nature of risk by ensuring that follow-up assessments take place to evaluate possible changes in risk levels. Risk should be assessed systematically, on a regular basis and in close cooperation with the victim. The frequency of follow-up assessments may be determined on a case-by-case basis and according to the level of risk identified.
- Risk assessment should directly correspond to strategies for risk management tailored to the victim's specific safety needs and should respond to the level of risk identified.

The immediate and ongoing safety and well-being of those affected by intimate partner violence must be the first priority and result of the risk assessment process.

To this end, the first guiding principle for police risk assessment is to effectively recognise and assess the risk of repeat victimisation, intimidation and retaliation in the context of intimate partner violence, and to ensure that victims receive the most effective support possible to reduce that risk.

In prioritising victim safety and well-being, the process of risk assessment should be used not to limit eligibility for services but, rather, to identify when enhanced or expedited intervention is necessary in order to keep women and children safe. In this way, risk assessment is not an end in itself but an entry point for female victims of intimate partner violence to the victim support system, regardless of risk level.