

Risk assessment and risk management by police

Step 2: Identify the most appropriate approach to police risk assessment

In deciding which approach to use, police should consider that effective risk assessment of intimate partner violence must meet the requirements set out below.

- The victim's own assessment of their safety and risk levels are taken into account to inform the risk level identified (on identifying the most relevant risk factors, see [Step 3](#)).
- Evidence-based risk factors are included in risk checklists and tools that accurately reflect the patterns and cumulative effects of intimate partner violence experienced by women, including coercive and controlling behaviour (on identifying the most relevant risk factors, see [Step 3](#)).
- The professional judgement of a trained practitioner is incorporated into the risk assessment process to ensure that it is flexible and draws on all the information known about the victim and their situation. If using an actuarial risk assessment tool, there should be sufficient flexibility for the professional to raise the risk level identified based on alternative sources of information, including the victim's own assessment and the police officer's professional judgement (on implementing systematic police training and capacity development, see [Step 4](#)).
- Internal guidelines and protocols are applied that ensure uniform and consistent implementation across the system.
- Procedures and referral mechanisms ensure that risk assessment outcomes are directly linked to risk management strategies that address all levels of risk and degrees of severity of intimate partner violence and take into account the individual needs of the victim (on embedding police risk assessment in a multiagency framework, see [Step 5](#)).
- Consistent data collection and analysis are used to evaluate risk assessment outcomes and consequently system responses (on monitoring and evaluating risk assessment practices and outcomes, see [Step 7](#)).

Risk assessment of intimate partner violence is implemented within EU Member States according to different approaches and, in some cases, a combination of approaches is used. The main approaches to risk assessment are unstructured clinical decision-making, the actuarial approach and the structured professional judgement approach.

Despite the diversity of approaches to risk assessment, there is an increasing trend towards structured methods that require the input of experienced professionals trained in the field of intimate partner violence. The structured professional judgement approach involves the use of risk assessment tools or a checklist to inform the judgement of a trained and experienced professional who then determines the victim's risk level (e.g. standard, medium or high risk). This approach, while providing guidance through tools and checklists, supports and builds on the education, training and experience of the police.

Moreover, it is used by a wide range of professionals outside law-enforcement, which facilitates a more consistent and effective approach across sectors and agencies to monitoring risk levels over time. Another benefit of the structured professional judgement approach is that it is risk management oriented with a strong focus on prevention of violence through safety planning. This helps keep the focus of risk assessment on risk prevention rather than exclusively on risk prediction (i.e. the actuarial approach).

The structured professional judgement approach also better incorporates the main principles for risk assessment outlined above, particularly in relation to being victim centred (see [Principle 2](#) on risk assessment), taking account of all available sources of information, and linking risk assessment outcomes to the development of strategies to manage and mitigate risk.