Combating violence against women

# IRELAND

NON.
NO.
NEIN.

Say No!
Stop
**violence**
against
women

**Violence against women** is rooted in women's unequal status in society, and that status reflects the unbalanced distribution of social, political, and economic power among women and men in society. It is one of the most pervasive human rights violations of our time and a form of discrimination that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women (1). Violence against women undermines women's dignity and integrity and imposes serious harms on families, communities and societies. In the EU, estimates suggest that 1 in 3 women (or 61 million out of 185 million) have experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, since the age of 15 (2).

The full extent of violence against women is difficult to estimate, as it continues to be under-reported and stigmatised, meaning that what actually gets reported is only a fraction of the reality. In Ireland, over 70 % of the population tend to trust the police (3).

In EIGE's Gender Equality Index 2015 it was found that where people tend to have more trust in justice institutions, levels of disclosed violence are higher (4). It is estimated that in Ireland, 26 % of women have experienced violence, which is 7 % lower than in the EU overall (5).

**The European Institute for Gender Equality has estimated that the cost of intimate partner violence against women in Ireland could amount to EUR 990 million per year. This figure was calculated according to the methodology used in EIGE's 2014 study (6), which Member States can replicate, as done by Estonia in 2016 (7).**

## What are the facts?

- 29 % of women in Ireland have been affected by domestic abuse ([8]).
- 12 % of Irish women and girls over the age of 15 have experienced stalking and 50 % of these were stalked by a partner or ex-partner ([9]).
- The number of sexual offences recorded in Ireland has risen from 1 801 in 2005 to 2 356 in 2015 ([10]).
- During the period 2010—2012, it is estimated that there were 183 victims of human trafficking in Ireland, of which 77 % were women ([11]).
- The 2014 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights survey data results showed that 1 in 4 women in Ireland have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 and 41 % of people in Ireland knew a woman within their circle of family and friends that has been a victim of domestic violence ([12]).

When trust in police is low, victims are less likely to report violence.

## Is violence against women a crime in Ireland?

Although there is no specific law on violence against women in Ireland, domestic violence and sexual violence (including sex trafficking) are considered serious criminal offences. Rape within marriage is also a criminal offence. Female genital mutilation is illegal, including when it takes place outside of Irish territory.

## What is being done to eliminate violence against women in Ireland?

The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (Cosc) developed the second national strategy on domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (2016—2021) in consultation with all relevant state and non-governmental organisations. The strategy takes a comprehensive approach to combating violence against women, with the aim to change societal attitudes to support a reduction in domestic and sexual violence, to improve support services available to victims and survivors, and to hold perpetrators accountable ([13]).

The second national action plan on women, peace and security was published in 2015. Particular priority is attached to the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, and abuse in crisis and conflict situations ([14]).

### Good practices show the way

Under action 16 of Ireland's national strategy, Cosc established a Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programme Committee to support and coordinate the work of intervention programmes for men who have used domestic violence against a female partner or ex-partner ([15]).

One such programme is Men Overcoming Violence (MOVE), which is a structured group-work programme for men who are, or have been, violent in an intimate relationship. The programme is designed to help the participants take responsibility for their violence and to choose to behave differently in the future. The primary aim of MOVE is to ensure the safety of women and children when working with men who are violent. For this reason, MOVE also provides all female partners/ex-partners of the men on the MOVE programmes with information, support and safety planning whilst, and after, their partners/ex-partners attend the programme ([16]).

## How are women and girls protected?

Women victims of domestic violence in Ireland have legal access to protection measures. A court may grant protection, barring and/or safety orders against a violent spouse or partner. These orders are enforced in cases where it is necessary to protect the welfare or safety of the victim and/or her dependent children. A breach of any order made under the domestic violence legislation is a criminal offence and the police can arrest and charge a person who breaches such an order ([17]).

Ireland has transposed Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime with the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Bill 2015, ensuring that women as victims of gender-based violence receive specialised support services. Those measures also protect women from further violence.

In September 2016, it was announced that new regional police units would be established to tackle domestic abuse and sexual offences ([18]), alongside a new risk management process to protect victims of domestic abuse ([19]).

Ireland signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) in November 2015, but has not yet ratified it. The Istanbul Convention is the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights. The Irish government has drafted an action plan with specific actions required for Ireland to be in a position to ratify the convention ([20]).

### What help is available in Ireland?

The Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline (1 800 341 900) is a 24/7 service that provides support and information to callers experiencing abuse from current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends ([21]). In 2015, Women's Aid Ireland received 16 375 disclosures of domestic violence against women ([22]).

The National Sexual Violence Helpline (1 800 778 888) is operated by Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and provides telephone support and referral to local services for all adult survivors of sexual violence and child sexual abuse.

There are 21 women's shelters in Ireland with 141 family places available. In 2014, 4 007 women and children were accommodated in emergency refuge accommodation ([23]).

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## Endnotes

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### European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

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