

What can I do if I am experiencing gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence is violence or abuse directed against a person because of their gender, often as an attempt to exert power. It may be emotional, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or spiritual. Forced marriage, female genital mutilation and human trafficking are also forms of gender-based violence. The violence may come from an intimate partner, a family member, someone in authority over you, someone else known to you or a stranger. It affects people of any class, race, religion or belief, age or sexuality.

'Gender-based violence' often refers to violence against women and girls in particular but it can also happen to men and boys. It is an attempt to exert power over another because of their gender.

**Gender-based violence is never acceptable or excusable.
If you are suffering or have suffered violence it is not your fault.
Gender-based violence IS serious and can lead to death.**

How do I recognise whether I am experiencing gender-based violence?

Violence takes different forms and you may be experiencing a number of them. Individual actions may also constitute a number of forms of violence. You may be abused in person, over the phone, online or through other methods of communication.

Controlling and coercive behaviour

Your abuser:

- Displays jealousy and possessiveness and checks up on you
- Pressurises you
- Makes decisions for you or penalises you for making 'wrong' decisions
- Controls and limits what you do, who you see, what you wear, your access to services etc
- Makes you feel that you have to change your behaviour
- Forces you to do things you don't want to, e.g. stealing
- Disguises control as 'concern'
- Denies that their behaviour is abusive

Emotional and psychological abuse

Your abuser:

- Displays 'Jekyll and Hyde' behaviour
- Mocks, humiliates and undermines you
- Verbally abuses you
- Manipulates and blames you
- Breaks your trust, e.g. by having affairs or lying to you
- Destroys things that are important to you
- Ignores you

Threatening behaviour

Your abuser:

- Intimidates and frightens you
- Uses threatening gestures and words
- Threatens a variety of harm e.g. to use physical or sexual violence, take any children away, abuse or hurt your family or friends, or to kill you or themselves
- Threatens you if you say you are going to leave the home or relationship

Isolation

Your abuser:

- Prevents or discourages you from having contact with family, friends or other social groups; or going to work/ college/ school
- Blocks or monitors your phone calls, text messages, emails etc
- Tells other people lies about you
- Gives you a curfew or locks you in the house

Harassment

Your abuser:

- Checks up on you and denies you your privacy, e.g. opening your mail, checking your mobile phone, reading your emails, checking your internet history
- Follows or stalks you
- Pesterns you in person or over the phone, including sexual pesterning
- Harasses or trolls you online, including sexual harassment
- Leaves you unwanted gifts

Financial abuse

Your abuser:

- 'Borrows' or steals money or possessions from you
- Limits, controls or prevents your access to money, benefits or other payments
- Builds up debt in your name
- Blackmails you
- Refuses to pay home/family bills
- Forces you to earn money for them/another person

Sexual violence

Your abuser:

- Rapes you
- Sexually assaults you
- Initiates sex whilst you are asleep or unable to give consent
- Forces you to engage in/perform sexual acts you don't want to; or threatens you if you refuse to do so
- Subjects you to degrading treatment
- Controls your birth control, or insists that you get pregnant or terminate a pregnancy
- Forces you to look at pornography or take part in the production of it
- Forces you to have sexual relationships with other people
- Forces you to prostitute yourself

Physical

Your abuser:

- Punches, hits, slaps, kicks, bites, pushes, shoves, throws, strangles, drowns or burns you, or pulls your hair
- Uses weapons and other objects to harm you
- Physically restrains you
- Forces you to use alcohol, drugs or other harmful substances
- Deprives you of sleep
- Attempts to kill you

Forced marriage

Your abuser:

- Forces you to marry someone when you do not give consent

What are my options if I am suffering or have suffered gender-based violence?

Ultimately, only you can decide what course of action to take, However, you could:

- Call the Police on 999 in the UK; or 999 or 112 in the Rep. Ireland in the case of threat to life or a criminal incident.
- Contact 101 in the UK or your local Garda in Rep. Ireland with more general concerns or information.
- If you are in the UK and concerned about your partner's behaviour, you have the 'right to ask' whether they have a history of violence, under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme ('Clare's Law'). In this instance, contact your local police force.
- Disclose the violence to a trusted person e.g. a friend, a family member, a neighbour, your employer or a professional. You may simply want to alert them to the situation or you may want their help, and if you intend to leave a violent relationship, you may need support from a specialist agency (see details below).
- Make a safety plan to protect and increase the safety of yourself, and any children, either within an abusive relationship or if you decide to leave. Identify a safe place you can go to, store provisions and documents that you will need and try to make any plans untraceable by your abuser.
- Keep a record of the violence (in a safe place) in case you want to give evidence in the case of a prosecution.
- Remember that if there are children in the home, domestic abuse is also a child protection issue.

What support is available to me?

UK

- **Forced Marriage Unit Helpline:** 020 7008 0151
- **Men's Advice Line:** 0808 80 10 327
www.mensadvice.org.uk
- **National Centre for Domestic Violence:** 0844 8044 999/ 0800 970 2070
www.ncdv.org.uk
- **National Domestic Violence Freephone Helpline:** 0808 2000 247
- **National LGBT Domestic Violence Helpline:** 0300 999 5428
www.brokenrainbow.org.uk
- **Rape Crisis England and Wales Freephone Helpline:** 0808 802 9999
www.rapecrisis.org.uk
- **Refuge:** 0808 2000 247
www.refuge.org.uk
- **Samaritans:** 08457 90 90 90
www.samaritans.org
- **The Survivors Trust:** 01788 550554
www.thesurvivorstrust.org

- **Victim Support:** 0845 30 30 900
www.victimsupport.org.uk

- **Women's Aid:** 0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk

Rep. Ireland

- **Amen (for men):** 046 9023 718
www.amen.ie
- **Crime Victims Helpline:** 116 006
<http://crimevictimshelpline.ie>
- **Samaritans:** 116 123
www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-work-ireland
- **Sonash Housing:** 1 8720068
www.sonashousing.ie/
- **The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence:** 1 4768680
www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/
- **Women's Aid:** 1800 341 900
www.womensaid.ie

What should you do if you suspect or witness gender-based violence?

What should you do if...

- ... a family member tells you they are suffering domestic violence?
- ... you notice your friend frequently being put down by their partner in front of others?
- ... you notice an employee coming into work with bruising or being absent on a regular basis?
- ... you witness someone being sexually harassed in a public place?

These are all examples of gender-based violence (GBV) - violence or abuse directed against a person because of their gender, often as an attempt to exert power. Gender-based violence may be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, financial or spiritual. Forced marriage, female genital mutilation and human trafficking are also forms of gender-based violence. The violence may come from an intimate partner, a family member, someone else known to the person or a stranger. Those involved can be from any class, race, religion or belief, age or sexuality.

'Gender-based violence' often refers to violence against women and girls in particular, as such violence is more prevalent against women; but it can also happen to men and boys.

Gender-based violence is never acceptable or excusable.

Learning or suspecting that someone you know is being abused is hard. Knowing how to respond can be difficult, especially if you are worried about making a situation worse. Each situation will be different but there are some general principles that you can follow.

How do you know whether someone is suffering GBV?

A person may be suffering or have suffered or violence if:

- They tell you
- You witness it
- They have physical injuries and give excuses to explain them away
- Their personality changes
- They display stress, depression or low self esteem
- They are regularly absent from work/college/school
- They stop socialising/ become more withdrawn
- They lack money and have to ask their partner for it
- They don't want to give out personal details such as their address or phone number.

How do you know if a person is being abusive to their partner?

- They are physically, sexually or verbally abusive
- They make threats against their partner
- They use manipulation and pressure tactics
- They are controlling e.g. what their partner wears, where they go, who they see, what they spend
- They criticise and humiliate their partner
- They are jealous and possessive
- They display 'Jekyll and Hyde' behaviour
- They accuse their partner of flirting and having affairs
- They monitor their partner's movements, mobile phone use, post etc
- They stalk and harass their (former) partner following the end of the relationship.

What should I do if someone discloses they are suffering GBV?

Try to...

- Take time to listen
- Affirm the strength and courage it takes to talk
- Express your concern for their safety
- Reassure them that violence is never justified and is a crime
- Check if it is alright to make contact with them at home
- Help them think of a safety plan
- Support them to access professional services.

Try not to...

- Dismiss anyone who comes to you for help
- Trivialise or dismiss what they tell you
- Ask what they did to provoke the violence
- Judge or criticise
- Initiate any physical contact
- Make decisions for the person
- Expect them to make decisions in a hurry
- Attempt to offer pastoral care to both the abused and the abuser.

What should I do if I witness GBV?

- Consider your own safety before any intervention
- Consider the safety and wellbeing of the victim
- Contact the police on 999 in the UK, or 999 or 112 in the Rep. Ireland in case of an emergency or direct threat
- Contact 101 in the UK or your local Garda in Rep. Ireland with more general concerns or information
- Make a note of the incident(s), and, if the perpetrator is unknown to you, their description

You may also be a bystander to abusive behaviour such as pestering, lewd or abusive comments or groping; either amongst strangers or within a group known to you. Think about how you might respond to support the victim and challenge the behaviour of the perpetrator(s). You could consider some scenarios and your response, for example challenging the perpetrator (either at the time or after), creating a distraction, defending the victim, calling for help or making a complaint. This can play an important part in building community accountability.

What should I do if I suspect someone is suffering or has suffered GBV?

- Find an appropriate time and place to express your concerns, away from the abuser. Be careful of communicating via text or email as the abuser may be monitoring these.
- Express your concern in a direct but sensitive manner. Explain what you have noticed, express concern and show support. However, avoid telling the person what to do.
- Let the person know what support you can offer, whether in a personal capacity, as an employer or as someone with pastoral responsibility e.g. at church.
- If the person says they are not being abused, keep monitoring the situation; and if you still suspect they are being abused, approach them again.
- Report your concerns to the police, either in person or by phoning 101 in the UK, or your local Garda station in Rep. Ireland. You can report concerns online to Police Scotland at www.scotland.police.uk/domestic-abuse
- If you are in the UK and concerned about a potential perpetrator, you have the 'right to ask' whether the individual has a history of violence, under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme ('Clare's Law'). In this instance, contact your local police force. The police will then decide whether or not to share any subsequent information with you.
- If you are in the UK and suspect a girl is at risk of female genital mutilation, contact either your local police, social services, the FGM helpline on 0800 028 3550 or the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000 or 0800 1111. If you are in the Rep. Ireland, contact your local HSE or HSE LoCall on 1850 241 850.

What support is available to victims/ survivors of GBV?

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- **National Centre for Domestic Violence:**
0844 8044 999/ 0800 970 2070
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- **Samaritans:** 116 123
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- **Sonass Housing:** 1 8720068
www.sonasshousing.ie/
- **The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence:** 1 4768680
www.cosc.ie/en/COSC/
- **Women's Aid:** 1800 341 900
www.womensaid.ie

Longer term

Whilst it can be a big step, disclosure is only part of an individual's experience of gender-based violence. Your family member, friend or colleague may need to find medical treatment, emergency shelter, housing, legal help, childcare and other support services, and may want your help in finding and using these. They may also value your support during any criminal or civil proceedings against the perpetrator, which may take a long period of time.

