

THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE



Domestic and family violence tears lives apart. Any behaviour that's controlling, threatening, violent or intended to make you or your family feel scared and unsafe can be considered domestic violence and abuse.

In Australia, domestic and family violence is prevalent: one in four women experience physical and/or sexual violence, caused by someone known to them, from the age of 15.

- Domestic abuse can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, or gender.
- Domestic abuse can occur within a range of relationships including couples who are married, living together or dating.
- Domestic abuse affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.

Domestic abuse affects women, children, men, the family and the community: it has big personal, social and economic effects.

Effects on the victim

- Death, illness, injury and disability — domestic and family violence is the leading cause of death, illness and disability for women aged under 45
- Emotional and psychological trauma — the devastating impact on an individual's physical, mental and emotional health including depression, shame, anger and suicide
- Homelessness — nearly one-third of people in NSW seeking help from homelessness services say domestic and family violence is an issue
- Use of alcohol and other drugs to deal with the pain
- Physical health injuries and problems, which may not get medically treated

Effects on the family

- Violence and the threat of violence at home creates fear and can destroy family environments and lead to the break-up of families
- Frequent moving to avoid the abuser
- Regular household conflict
- Child protection or police involvement

Effects on the community

- Children growing up without learning about positive and respectful relationships
- Abusers going to prison
- Higher rates of alcohol and other drug use, and mental health problems
- Domestic and family violence is estimated to cost the NSW economy more than \$4.5 billion each year

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Effects on children

Of those women who experience violence, more than 50% have children in their care. Children and young people don't have to see the violence to be affected by it. Studies show that living with domestic violence can cause physical and emotional harm to children and young people in the following ways:

- ongoing anxiety and depression
- emotional distress
- eating and sleeping disturbances
- physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomach aches
- find it hard to manage stress
- low self-esteem
- self-harm
- be aggressive towards friends and school mates
- feel guilt or blame themselves for the violence
- have trouble forming positive relationships
- develop phobias and insomnia
- struggle with going to school and doing school work
- use bullying behaviour or become a target of bullying
- difficulty concentrating
- find it hard to solve problems
- have less empathy and caring for others

Children and young people need to grow up in a secure and nurturing environment. Where domestic or family violence exists, the home is not safe or secure and children are scared about what might happen to them and the people they love.

(Ref: The effects of domestic violence on children and young people | Family & Community Services (nsw.gov.au))

If someone who has a close personal relationship with you makes you feel afraid, powerless, or unsafe, or if you are afraid to disagree or negotiate for what you want, this may be a sign of abuse.

All individuals have the right to be free from violence. If you are experiencing abuse it is not your fault, it is the abuser who is responsible. Domestic and family violence is a crime. It is ok to reach out and ask for help!

IF YOU ARE IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, PHONE 000 AND ASK FOR THE POLICE AND/OR AN AMBULANCE

1800RESPECT

is the 24-hour national domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service. Call 1800 737 732.

LIFELINE

is a non-profit organisation that provides free, 24-hour telephone crisis support service in Australia. Call 13 11 14.

Call **GOT YOUR BACK SISTA** on **02 4989 2777** during business hours to book an appointment with our Support Team or receive information and advice.

