

# Maintaining Momentum

- Toward an Equal Ireland with Zero Tolerance of Domestic Abuse, and all forms of violence against women.

General Election Manifesto  
November 2024



Supporting  
women  
through  
generations



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## Introduction

The General Election 2024 is an opportunity to maintain momentum towards creating an equal Ireland with zero tolerance of domestic abuse and all forms of violence against women. Women's Aid commends the extensive progress in responding to domestic, sexual and gender-based-violence (henceforth DSGBV) which has been made since the last general election.

This progress includes:

1. Important legislative changes, such as the creation of new offences to criminalise image based sexual abuse<sup>1</sup>, non-fatal strangulation or suffocation and stalking<sup>2</sup> and paid Domestic Violence leave, have been enacted.
2. The ambitious Third National Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Strategy (henceforth the TNS) is being implemented, including the setting up Cuan, the new dedicated Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency, work has begun to reform the family law system and revise SPHE and RSE school curricula to include reference to gender equality, consent and healthy relationships.
3. There have been welcome increased resources for vital specialist domestic violence services, though these are coming from a baseline of historic neglect and are still not sufficient.

However, there is still much to be done:

1. Specialist services are still overstretched and underfunded, and therefore unable to meet ever increasing demand, especially for more marginalized women.
2. The housing crisis and dearth of appropriate specialist accommodation provision for survivors of abuse limits options for a safe home.
3. The Family and Criminal law systems do not work efficiently for survivors of domestic violence and abuse creating lengthy, protracted, and traumatising delays for women and unsafe outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> S2 and S3, Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020

<sup>2</sup> S 21, S22 and S23 Criminal Justice Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023

4. Young women report very high level of intimate partner and other forms of gender-based violence, which sadly does not seem to be decreasing.
5. Online/technology facilitated gender-based violence, and the harms of online pornography are on the increase, with little meaningful accountability for hosting/facilitating platforms.

The next Government needs to secure, strengthen, and continue the progress made to date. This will require **significant and continued investment** to properly resource and implement the reforms and measures included in the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based violence<sup>3</sup> and other relevant reforms (such as Family Court reform), address inadequate funding legacy and increased demand for services, and carry out sustained and integrated prevention measures.

## The Facts

**One in three women** in Ireland who have been in a relationship have experienced psychological abuse by a partner.

*(Violence against Women: An EU Wide Survey, European Union Fundamental Rights Agency 2014)*

**25% of women** in Ireland experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner.

*(Sexual Violence Survey, CSO, 2022)*

**1 in 5 young women** in Ireland have been subjected to intimate relationship abuse with **51%** of young women affected experienced the abuse **under the age of 18**.

*(One in Five Young Women Report, Women's Aid, 2020)*

In 2023 there were **28,638 contacts with Women's Aid**. During these contacts, we heard **40,048 disclosures of domestic abuse** including 35,570 disclosures of abuse against women and 4,478 disclosures of abuse against children.

*(Women's Aid Annual Impact Report 2023)*

Since 1996, **267 women have died violently in the Republic of Ireland**. Of the women that were killed **63% were killed in their own homes, 55% were killed by a partner or ex** and almost **9 in 10 women knew their killer** (of the resolved cases).

*(Women's aid Femicide Watch 2024)*

An Garda Síochána received over **54,000 domestic abuse calls** in 2023.

*(An Garda Síochána, December 2023)*

<sup>3</sup> ZERO TOLERANCE Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence 2022-2026 and Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence Implementation Plans, both available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a43a9-third-national-strategy-on-domestic-sexual-and-gender-based-violence/>



## Domestic Violence Priorities and Actions - Summary

Women’s Aid calls on all parties to support the full implementation and adequate resourcing of the TNS and to commit to the priorities and actions outlined in this Manifesto.

### Our Over-Arching Priorities

1. Properly **resource and implement** the **Third National Strategy** on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.
2. **Ensure** that the TNS **commitment to an intersectional focus** is consciously reflected in all actions taken and is fully resourced.
3. **Ensure** that **children are central in all actions** of the Strategy and have a voice in its delivery
4. **Combat online DSGBV**, including intimate image abuse (IIA), by preventing abuse, protecting, and providing resources for victims/survivors, addressing the harms of online pornography and holding online platforms and social media accountable.

### The Four Pillars of Action

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prevention</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and deliver on an Action Plan to Implement Recommendations of the Study on Familicide and Domestic and Family Violence Death Reviews.</li> <li>2. Continue updating the SPHE/RSE Curricula to address gender equality, sexism and DSGBV.</li> <li>3. Address the role of pornography and social media in contributing to gender inequality, harmful sexual behaviours and reinforcing gender stereotypes.</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Protection</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide adequate, secure multi-annual fundraising for specialist domestic abuse services.</li> <li>2. Ensure a gender informed national Housing Strategy which prioritises access to affordable and secure housing for women and children escaping domestic abuse.</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Prosecution</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue, refine, and adequately resource the Family Law Reform Bill</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Policy Integration and Data Collection</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a detailed implementation plan for the full length of the TNS, and</li> </ol>





<p>and the Family Justice Strategy.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Establish mechanisms to prevent siloing of criminal justice, private family law and public law child care processes.</li> <li>3. Ensure initial and ongoing quality training on domestic abuse including coercive control for legal professionals in family law and criminal justice systems.</li> </ol>	<p>the preparation of the next strategy.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Establish a Special Rapporteur/Commissioner on DSGBV with appropriate resources and independent powers to monitor the implementation of the TNS.</li> <li>3. Ensure accurate administrative data on DSGBV, including coherent data from the justice system, are gathered centralised and published by Cuan, the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency.</li> <li>4. Commission a national Domestic Abuse Prevalence Survey in collaboration with domestic violence specialist organisations.</li> </ol>
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## Domestic Violence Priorities and Actions - in Full

### Our Over-Arching Priorities

**1. Properly resource and implement the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence**

- The Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence is a comprehensive strategy addressing all the 4 Pillars of the Istanbul Convention: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Policy Integration & Data Collection.
- The TNS was co-designed with, and has the support of, the domestic, sexual and gender-based violence sector. The co-design and ongoing collaboration with specialist organisations are essential to its effective centering and supporting victims/survivors.
- It is essential that the next Government continues to deliver the Strategy and that all its goals and objectives are implemented and resourced, including funding of specialist support services, research, and data collection.

**2. Ensure that the TNS commitment to an intersectional focus is consciously reflected in all actions taken and is fully resourced.**

- The TNS includes a welcome intersectional lens, which recognises that domestic and sexual abuse is distinctly gendered but also that people may suffer from additional, multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination.
- This approach allows a deeper understanding and better response to the experiences and needs of socially excluded groups, particularly women in these groups who suffer DSGBV (including Travellers, other ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, disabled people, members of the LGBTQ+ communities and others).

**3. Ensure that children are central in all actions of the TNS and have a voice in its delivery.**

- The TNS has a focus on children and young people, as both witnesses and victims/survivors, in line with Ireland's obligation under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Istanbul Convention.
- Importantly, many actions in the prevention pillar focus on children and young people to promote a more equal society and reduce DSGBV in the future.

**4. Combat online DSGBV, including intimate image abuse (IIA), by preventing abuse, protecting, and providing resources for victims/survivors, addressing the harms of online pornography, and holding online platforms and social media accountable.**

- Online DSGBV is an increasing problem with huge detrimental impact on women and girls both online and offline. It falls within the scope of both the CEDAW Convention and the Istanbul Convention, so there are clear international obligations to address this form of DSGBV.
- Online abuse within and outside of relationships is of great concern especially regarding the younger generations.
- Research found that of the 1 in 5 young women who experience intimate relationship abuse in Ireland, nearly half (47%) experience online abuse by their partners and ex-partners. Of these, 20% had images or videos taken of them without their consent with 15% having been threatened with sharing sexually explicit intimate photos and or videos and 17% having actually had sexually explicit or intimate videos or images shared without their consent.<sup>4</sup>
- Non-consensual sharing of intimate images has been criminalised by the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020. However criminal prosecutions take time and, for a variety of reasons, do not always go ahead. For many women, the most pressing concern is to have harmful content removed before it goes viral and causes significant and permanent damage.
- While [Hotline.ie](https://www.hotline.ie) provides a valuable service in helping victims remove IIA content, its remit does not extend to private communications such as messaging apps and it has no power to enforce take downs, relying instead on partnerships with providers.
- A fast, free, and enforceable mechanism to remove IIA and content promoting DSGBV from online platforms and social media and prevent its spreading is needed.

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<sup>4</sup> Women's Aid (2020) One in Five Young Women Suffer Intimate Relationship Abuse in Ireland, <https://www.womensaid.ie/app/uploads/2023/04/One-in-Five-Young-Women-Report-2020.pdf>





- Strong measures are also needed to make platforms and social media accountable for the harm caused by such content and from algorithms amplifying it.
- Measures to address the harms of online pornography and particularly the risk of exposure/consumption by children are urgently needed.

## The Four Pillars of Action

### Pillar One - Prevention

**Action 1:** Develop and deliver on an action plan to implement the recommendations of the Study on Familicide and Domestic and Family Violence Death Reviews and establish Domestic and Family Violence Death Reviews as a priority.

#### Why:

- The Study on Familicide and Domestic and Family Violence Death Reviews<sup>5</sup> found that in the period 2014 - 2019 there were forty-nine people killed by domestic/family violence. Current or previous partners killed twenty-one people (fifteen women and six men). These deaths represented 43% of domestic homicide victims.
- The Study recommends the establishment of Family Violence Death Reviews, whose aim is to learn from domestic homicides to identify and address gaps in systemic response, thereby preventing future deaths and improving responses to victims of DVA. The Study makes detailed recommendations on how to implement Family Violence Death Reviews, which Women's Aid supports.
- The Study also makes comprehensive recommendations on how to support bereaved families, friends, and communities, which should be implemented without delay.

**Action 2:** Continue to update the SPHE/RSE Curricula to ensure they address gender equality, sexism, DSGBV, consent, healthy relationships and the negative impacts of pornography and provide resources and training for their effective delivery.

#### Why:

- Intimate partner violence and abuse does not seem to be reducing, with 1 in 5 young women and 1 in 11 young men (18-25 years old) suffering abuse from a current or former intimate partner.

<sup>5</sup> Department of Justice, 2023, A Study on Familicide & Domestic and Family Violence Death Reviews; <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/823ba-study-on-familicide-domestic-and-family-violence-death-reviews/>

- Of the young women who experienced abuse 92% experienced emotional abuse, 77% coercive control, 32% more severe and 58% less severe physical abuse, 55% stalking/harassment.
- 3 in 4 were sexually coerced, with 51% sexually assaulted and 27% raped.
- For 51% of the young women who experienced relationship abuse, the abuse started before they turned 18.<sup>6</sup>
- Prevention at all school levels is necessary to reduce DSGBV in the future. Schools at all levels should implement a reformed SPHE curriculum to cover age-appropriate content on gender equality, prevention of sexism, homophobia and transphobia, healthy and unhealthy relationships, consent, and the impact of pornography.
- The TNS includes relevant actions which are in progress. The reforms to the SPHE and RSE curricula must be sustained and implemented consistently. There should be funding for resources and ongoing training for teachers delivering the curricula. Given the lifelong importance of the topics all students should have the opportunity to engage with the reformed SPHE/RSE curricula which should be prioritised during their education years.

**Action 3:** Address the role of pornography and social media in contributing to gender inequality, harmful sexual behaviours and reinforcing gender stereotypes.

**Why:**

- The TNS recognises the harm of pornography, and its links with prostitution and trafficking.<sup>7</sup>
- Pornography shapes unequal and disrespectful sexual expectations, dehumanizes women and girls and depicts, normalizes, and promotes sexual violence:
  - Almost 90% of scenes contain aggression.
  - 1 in 8 titles shown to first time viewers (children) constitute sexual violence<sup>8</sup>
- Pornography is widely available, including to children and young people, and shapes their understanding of sex and relationships. It harms **both** girls and boys, by

<sup>6</sup> Women’s Aid (2020) One in Five Young Women Suffer Intimate Relationship Abuse in Ireland, <https://www.womensaid.ie/app/uploads/2023/04/One-in-Five-Young-Women-Report-2020.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Zero Tolerance, op.cit, page 26. See also Actions 1.1.4 and 1.3.7 of the Implementation Plan

<sup>8</sup> Sexual violence as a sexual script in mainstream online pornography, Vera-Grey et al, The British Journal of Criminology, Volume 61, Issue 5, September 2021.

influencing expectations, normalising disrespectful sexual behaviour, and promoting misogynistic, and often abusive and violent models of sexual expectation.

- Evidence links teenage boys’ perpetration of sexual violence and coercion with regular viewing of online porn, with the UK courts warning that extreme pornography is now a ‘routine factor’ in sexual offending by children and drives teenagers to view CSAM<sup>9</sup>.
- Most Irish people believes that pornography is too accessible to children, and that it contributes to gender inequality, coercion and sexual violence against women and girls. 81% of all respondents want age-appropriate sexuality and relationships education in all schools which includes a focus on the negative consequences of exposure to pornography<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Pornography, Sexual Coercion and Abuse and Sexting in Young People's Intimate Relationships: A European Study, Stanley et al, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Women’s Aid, 2022, It’s time to talk about porn Irish attitudes on the links between pornography, sexual development, gender inequality and violence against women and girls; [https://www.womensaid.ie/assets/files/pdf/its\\_time\\_to\\_talk\\_about\\_porn\\_report\\_womens\\_aid\\_november\\_2022.pdf](https://www.womensaid.ie/assets/files/pdf/its_time_to_talk_about_porn_report_womens_aid_november_2022.pdf)

## Pillar Two - Protection

**Action 1:** Provide adequate and secure multi-annual funding for domestic violence specialist services to effectively cover all their vital functions.

### Why:

- Domestic violence specialist services need adequate and secure multi-annual funding to continue and improve their response to women and children subjected to domestic violence.
- There has been a welcome increase in resources for specialist domestic violence services in the last few years, but these are coming from a baseline of historic neglect and huge cuts to the sector during the 2008 recession as well as increased costs during the pandemic.
- Women's Aid frontline services are working to capacity. In 2023 there were 28,638 contacts with Women's Aid. During these contacts, we heard 40,048 disclosures of domestic abuse including 35,570 disclosures of abuse against women and 4,478 disclosures of abuse against children.
- Awareness raising initiatives scheduled in the TNS means that more victims/survivors will come forward and services need to be resourced to meet this expected increase in demand.
- Specialist services need additional resources to better reach and support vulnerable groups, such as Traveller, migrant or refugee women and children, women and children with a disability, women with alcohol and drugs abuse issues, homeless women and children, LGBTQ people.
- Specialist services do not only provide direct support to victims/survivors: they also engage in policy, awareness raising and cultural change. All these functions are necessary to achieve significant reduction of DSGBV and deserve to be funded.



**Action 2:** Ensure a gender-informed Housing Strategy which prioritises access to affordable and secure housing for women and children escaping domestic violence and abuse.

**Why:**

- Domestic violence is a key driver of women and children’s homelessness<sup>11</sup>. Currently victims of domestic violence and abuse face huge issues in securing accommodation both emergency and long term, including:
  - Refuges are often full as there are not enough units, which prevents women from leaving dangerous homes.<sup>12</sup>
  - Huge waiting lists, administrative barriers and inconsistent application of guidelines prevent domestic violence and abuse victims from accessing social housing or being prioritised.
  - The housing crisis, along with the lack of reflection of domestic abuse in national housing policy, makes securing accommodation nearly impossible for women who have suffered economic abuse, have little access to savings or the family estate and may have negative credit history due to the abuser’s actions.
- The government has committed to double refuge accommodation over the lifetime of the TNS<sup>13</sup>. The fast delivery of this accommodation must remain a priority. All refuges should also be funded to specifically support children traumatised by domestic violence and abuse and must be accessible to disabled women and children.
- **Zero** has been done so far in relation to providing **long-term** safe, secure, and affordable accommodation. In its absence women and children remain in refuges for longer than needed, return to the abuser, or move to unstable and inadequate

<sup>11</sup> Mayock P. and Neary F, 2021, Domestic Violence & Family Homelessness, Focus Ireland; [https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Domestic-Violence-and-Family-Homelessness-Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Domestic-Violence-and-Family-Homelessness-Report_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Tusla, Child and Family Agency, 2022 Review of the Provision of Accommodation for Victims of Domestic Violence

<sup>13</sup> Action 2.3.2 of the TNS Implementation Plan

premises or straight into homelessness. Secure housing is needed to support recovery and ensure safety.

- The current national Housing Strategy<sup>14</sup> does not specifically mention survivors of domestic violence and abuse<sup>15</sup> nor includes any specific actions in relation to supporting their long-term housing needs.
- Women's Aid believes that the national Housing Strategy should address domestic violence and abuse as a key driver of homelessness and should include measures to provide survivors with affordable, accessible, and long-term housing, including but not limited to consistent application of local housing guidelines in allocation which prioritises survivors.

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<sup>14</sup> Government of Ireland, Housing for All, a new Housing Plan for Ireland;  
[file:///home/utente/Desktop/197237\\_29edec3e-6664-4e62-86b2-af2e77f2f609.pdf](file:///home/utente/Desktop/197237_29edec3e-6664-4e62-86b2-af2e77f2f609.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Except for just mentioning the development of new refuges under the CAP Scheme, page 72, ibidem

## Pillar Three – Prosecution

**Action 1:** Continue, refine, and adequately resource the Family Law Reform Bill and the Family Justice Strategy, so that they center-stage and protect the safety and welfare of women and children separating from an abuser.

### Why:

- Family Law remains one of the biggest and most intractable issues facing women with children separating from an abuser, with our daily work with women indicating that the Family Law Courts do not consistently ensure their safety nor that of their children.<sup>16</sup>
- Premises are old and inadequate, the Courts are overburdened, and proceedings are prolonged, stressful and costly. Legal Aid provision is inadequate (including the lack of available solicitors) and the system for acquiring expert reports to represent the voice of the child is completely unfit for purpose.<sup>17</sup>
- The women accessing our services report that many professionals, including judges and child report experts, do not understand the issues faced by women separating from an abuser nor the impact of domestic abuse, including coercive control, on children.
- The misuse of the unscientific and discredited Parental Alienation concept is also a huge issue.<sup>18</sup> There is a pro-contact assumption that often trumps considerations regarding the risk to the children and their mothers, as well as sometimes the stated wishes of children not to be forced to go on access. As a result, Custody and Access orders by the courts are often dangerous and/or detrimental to the safety and the well-being of children and their mothers and allow the abuse to continue.

<sup>16</sup> For more information and specific recommendations see: Women’s Aid Submission to the Family Justice Oversight Group Consultation, February 2021, The Children and Domestic Violence Group Submission to the Family Justice Oversight Group Consultation, February 2021, the Women’s Aid submission to the Family Court Bill General Scheme, February 2021 and the Women’s Aid submission to the Child Maintenance Review Group, March 2021; all available at <https://www.womensaid.ie/get-informed/publications/>

<sup>17</sup> Department of Justice, 2024, Review of the Role of Expert Reports in the Family Law Process, <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/295856/f52bb897-bb6f-4fbc-b4de-5aa7fab484f5.pdf#page=null>

<sup>18</sup> See [https://www.womensaid.ie/app/uploads/2023/07/submission\\_on\\_parental\\_alienation\\_june\\_2022.pdf](https://www.womensaid.ie/app/uploads/2023/07/submission_on_parental_alienation_june_2022.pdf)

- In the rare cases where supervised access is ordered, there are no state funded facilities where it can take place. In many cases the woman or her family must supervise it at great risk to their safety and wellbeing.
- Currently sweeping reforms of the Family Courts are in train under the Family Courts Bill 2022 and the Family Justice Strategy. There is much to be commended in both, however we remain concerned that DVA is not sufficiently considered nor addressed. This transformative work must also be fully budgeted for by government to ensure it can succeed.
- As the prevalence of DVA in Family Law proceeding is likely high<sup>19</sup> and the consequences of not addressing it are dire, awareness of DVA needs to be at the core of any reform, with clear principles prioritising the safety of children and non-abusive parents.
- These reforms need to be resourced with adequate, multi annual funding to build or renovate premises, fund training for all court professionals, fund adequate provision of Legal Aid, provide for trained, qualified and accredited experts, provide for mechanisms to hear the voice of the child and fund specialist court support services.
- Improving Family Justice is not solely the remit of the Department of Justice: appropriate support structures need to be put in place to ensure safety, for example a network of quality supervised child contact centres need to be established and funded as an urgent priority.

**Action 2:** Establish mechanisms to prevent the current siloing of criminal justice, private family law and public law child care processes in relation to domestic and sexual violence.

**Why:**

- Women and children impacted by domestic and/or sexual abuse may be involved in concurrent processes in the criminal court, the family court and public child care law; these often do not collaborate or communicate with each other, to the detriments of victims/survivors.

<sup>19</sup> While there is no data for Ireland, in the UK the prevalence of DVA in Family Law cases has been estimated at between 49% and 62% , Minister of Justice, 2020, Assessing Risk of Harm to Children and Parents in Private Law Children Cases; <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/assessing-risk-of-harm-to-children-and-parents-in-private-law-children-cases>

- The Report on the Intersection of the Criminal Justice, Private Family Law and Public Law Child Care Processes in Relation to Domestic and Sexual Violence<sup>20</sup> makes a number of recommendations to address this issue, which Women’s Aid supports.

**Action 3:** Ensure initial and ongoing quality training on understanding the dynamics and impact of domestic abuse, including coercive control is provided consistently to all professionals in both the criminal and family justice systems in partnership with specialist domestic abuse organisations who design and deliver such training.

**Why:**

- Training is essential for professionals to consistently recognise DVA, including coercive control, respond appropriately, provide referrals and avoid secondary victimisation.<sup>21</sup>
- Training is still not provided widely and consistently enough, in many cases is not mandatory and it is not assessed, notwithstanding progress for some specific groups
- Training should be provided and, where relevant, mandated for all criminal and family justice professionals, including An Garda Síochána, DPP, judges, legal personnel, child expert reporters and social workers
- Training should be provided in partnership with specialist DVA services with training expertise, should be tailored to the role and specific agency of the trainees and should be adequately resourced and funded.

<sup>20</sup> Nuala Egan & Ellen O’Malley Dunlop, March 2023, A Report on the Intersection of the Criminal Justice, Private Family Law and Public Law Child Care Processes in Relation to Domestic and Sexual Violence. [https://www.nwci.ie/images/uploads/NWC\\_DoJ\\_DSV\\_Justice\\_Report.pdf](https://www.nwci.ie/images/uploads/NWC_DoJ_DSV_Justice_Report.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> This is recognised in the TNS Actions 1. 4.1 to 1.4.6 as well as the Istanbul Convention, Article 15.



## Pillar Four - Policy Integration and Data Collection

**Action 1:** Develop without delay a detailed implementation plan for the remaining years of the Third National Strategy on DSGBV, with clear responsibilities allocated to all government departments and agencies, and with support and oversight of the Cabinet committee.

**Why:**

- Given the prevalence and impact of DSGBV, Women’s Aid believes that it should stay at the top of the political agenda with oversight and coordination remaining at Cabinet level.
- The two National Strategy Implementation Plans included actions only for 2022 / 2023 and for 2024 respectively and are therefore out of date. A detailed Implementation Plan is urgently needed to outline actions and responsibilities for the remainder of the Strategy (2025-2026).

**Action 2:** Establish a Special Rapporteur or Ombudsman/Commissioner on domestic, sexual and gender base violence, with appropriate resources and independent powers to monitor Ireland’s implementation of relevant international instruments and of the Third National Strategy.

**Why:**

- To ensure the correct implementation of the Istanbul Convention and the success of the TNS, an expert independent monitoring mechanism needs to be established to report regularly on progress achieved, gaps and barriers.
- This could take the form of a Special Rapporteur, such as the National Rapporteur On Trafficking in Human Beings or an Ombudsman/Commissioner with adequate resources and powers to develop recommendations and monitor their implementation.

**Action 3:** Ensure accurate administrative data on domestic and sexual violence are centralised and published by the new DSGBV Agency.

**Why:**

- The collection and publication of accurate data and statistics on DSGBV is necessary for planning, delivering, and evaluating responses to victims and

survivors, as required by the Istanbul Convention<sup>22</sup>. Data must be disaggregated by sex of the victim and perpetrator and identify the relationship between them. Data collection was an Action in the Second National Strategy<sup>23</sup> and remains an Action under the current strategy<sup>24</sup>.

- Nonetheless progress in this area has been limited (mostly to An Garda Síochána) with **basic** information still not being collected by the Courts, such as the relationship between victim and perpetrators<sup>25</sup>. It is therefore not possible to analyse data on offences committed in the context of domestic abuse or on the prevalence of DVA in Family Law cases from Courts statistics.
- Data from other state bodies, such as hospitals or local authorities, remains completely unavailable, so we cannot estimate how many women and children are homeless or needed hospital care because of DVA.
- What partial data may be collected by different departments for administrative purposes is not comparable, standardised, or regularly published.
- The new DSGBV Agency will collect administrative data from the specialist services it will fund. It should also gather and publish in a centralised location all data from other relevant agencies and government departments.

**Action 4:** Commission a Domestic Abuse Prevalence Survey without delay in consultation with DVA specialist organisations.

**Why:**

- The last prevalence DVA surveys conducted in Ireland was the National Crime Survey published in 2005<sup>26</sup> with data collected in 2003, followed by the EU FRA Survey in 2014<sup>27</sup>, with data collected in 2003; both are now quite dated.

<sup>22</sup> Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

<sup>23</sup> Action 3.600, Action Plan Second National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2016 – 2021,

<sup>24</sup> Action 4.3 of the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence Implementation Plan  
<sup>25</sup> Note: this is collected by An Garda Síochána but does not carry forward in the process

<sup>26</sup> The National Crime Council in association with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI). (2005). Domestic abuse of women and men in Ireland: Report on the national study of domestic abuse.

<sup>27</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. <http://fra.europa.eu/DVS/DVT/vaw.php>.



- National Sexual Violence and Domestic Violence Prevalence studies are included in Action 4.2.4 of the TNS Implementation Plan to be conducted alternately at 5-year intervals.
- The CSO has recently published the results of its excellent Sexual Violence Survey and has been tasked with carrying out a Domestic Abuse survey to be completed by 2028. This must go ahead without delay.

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