



WOMEN'S AID
Making Women and Children Safe

IMPACT REPORT summary 2015

16,375
disclosures of
**DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE**
against women

10,876 disclosures of
Emotional Abuse

3,281 disclosures of
Physical Abuse

1,602 disclosures of
Financial Abuse

616 disclosures of
Sexual Abuse

5,966

disclosures of
CHILD ABUSE
including emotional,
physical and sexual
abuse.

167,229
VISITS TO
www.WomensAid.ie



“ I still think of that day – the day I called Women’s Aid – as the day my life changed forever. ”

THE ABUSE

10,876

disclosures of EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Emotional abuse disclosed in 2015 included being **controlled, manipulated and isolated** from family and friends. Being **stalked including online, death threats and being blamed** for the abuse. Women speak of the pain of emotional abuse and how difficult it is for the rest of the world to see or understand. It can often be the **most damaging form of abuse**. Where there is no physical and sexual violence there is the threat and fear of it. These threats are brutal, detailed and very frightening.

3,281

disclosures of PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical assault within a relationship is a **serious crime**. Some women are assaulted daily while for other women there is no way of knowing when the next attack will come. The threat of violence against women and their children always hangs in the air. In 2015, the physical abuse disclosed included being **slapped, punched, kicked, bitten, strangled, cut with knives, hit with golf clubs and scalded with hot liquid**.

616

disclosures of SEXUAL ABUSE

There were 616 disclosures of sexual abuse in 2015. This figure includes **212 disclosures of rape**. Sexual abuse has always been an element within domestic violence and includes a range of different behaviours. Women disclose that they are **raped, beaten during sex and are being emotionally coerced into sex**. Many women find speaking about the sexual relationship with their abuser difficult and at times, struggle to identify coercion and forced sexual activity as the crime of sexual violence. But sexual violence, even within a relationship, or by an ex-partner, is a **crime**.

1,602

disclosures of FINANCIAL ABUSE

Financial abuse continues to be an issue for women with 1,602 disclosures in 2015. It is one of the most effective ways for abusers to control and undermine the women they are hurting. By controlling the woman's access to financial resources the abuser ensures that she is forced to **choose between staying in an abusive relationship or face extreme poverty**. Women disclosed that they were being **left without means or access to income**. It was also disclosed that abusers were **controlling women's salaries and/or social welfare payments and running up debt** in women's names. Financial abuse often continues after separation through **hiding family assets and not paying child maintenance**.

IMPACT ON WOMEN

Women and children experiencing abuse should never be portrayed as passive victims. In reality, women are trying to live their lives, protect themselves and their children, study, work and look after others while suffering the most horrific abuse. Yet, the impacts of domestic violence on women, their children and the community around them cannot be minimised or ignored. The impacts of abuse as disclosed to Women's Aid include:

1. Being hospitalised, having broken limbs, jaws, cheekbones, brain and head injuries and internal injuries from sexual assault. Having bruising, black eyes and being left with permanent scars and disfigurement.
2. Passing out whilst being strangled.
3. Sexual health issues including STIs or experiencing an unplanned pregnancy following rape.
4. Experiencing miscarriage as a result of an assault.
5. Poverty and homelessness.
6. Alcohol and substance misuse.
7. Feeling terrified and confused. Afraid of seeking support from family members for fear of putting them at risk.
8. Feeling traumatised, distressed and overwhelmed following assaults and hospitalisation.
9. Feeling absolute terror, stress, fear and panic.
10. Feeling exhausted, isolated, depressed, put down and having low self-esteem and self-doubt. Feeling insecure, alone and powerless.

“ After calling Women's Aid I went straight upstairs, packed my things and left.

I never looked back. ”

THE ABUSER

For the women who contacted us in 2015, **marriage** remained the **most common context** for domestic violence (**42%**). However, almost **one quarter of women (23%)** disclosed they were being abused by an **ex-husband or ex-partner**.

81% of women disclosed abuse by a **current or ex male intimate partner** in 2015

RELATIONSHIP

Husband	42%
Ex-husband	6%
Partner	16%
Ex-partner	17%

Domestic violence violates a woman's human rights. It is about **POWER** and **CONTROL** and it is deliberate, systematic and intentional behaviour. Abusers choose to abuse. There is **NO EXCUSE.**

CHILDREN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In 2015 there were **5,966 disclosures of child abuse** to the Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline and One to One Support Services.¹ This figure includes **5,582**

disclosures of emotional abuse and **281 disclosures where children were physically or sexually abused** by the perpetrator of their mother's abuse. It also includes **82 disclosures** of where children were **being abused during access visits** and **21 disclosures of child abduction** in the context of domestic violence.

5,966 disclosures of **CHILD ABUSE** in 2015

1. Women's Aid has a policy in line with Children First 2011 which callers and clients are made aware of when confidentiality or limits of confidentiality are being disclosed.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO SAFETY

There can be significant barriers to safety for women and children. In 2015 we heard about the difficulties facing women including **online abuse and stalking, lack of legal protection for young women experiencing dating abuse, the dangerous nature of domestic violence and the threat to life**, negotiating the **legal system** and the impact of the **housing crisis**.

ONLINE ABUSE AND STALKING IN RELATIONSHIPS

A snapshot taken between April to December 2015 showed that **online abuse and stalking was disclosed to Women's Aid on 293 occasions**. Women disclosed that their **online use was being tracked and scrutinised** and that their partners **demand access to their private email and social networking accounts**. We also heard from women

12% of Irish women and girls over the age of 15 have experienced **stalking** with **50%** being stalked, physically and online, by a partner or ex-partner.²

whose partners and ex-partners had placed **lies, false rumours and bogus escort ads** on internet sites. Women's Aid also heard from women who **had been photographed and filmed without their consent**, sometimes having sex, and having

the **images uploaded to the internet** and/or being used to **blackmail** them.

Stalking by a partner or ex-partner is one of the most **predictive** factors of both **further assault and homicide**.

LACK OF PROTECTION FOR YOUNG WOMEN

In 2015, there were just over **17,000 visits to www.2in2u.ie**, the Women's Aid dating abuse website. Research has shown that while young women can be at even higher risk of abuse in a relationship than their older counterparts, there is low

recognition of controlling and coercive relationship behaviour among young women.

Young women who have **never cohabited** with their boyfriends fall outside the remit

In Ireland, **60%** of abuse starts before the age of **25**.³

of the Domestic Violence Act. To fully protect young women from dating abuse, we need to make safety orders available to women who have never lived with their boyfriends. Until these changes are made, young women in dating relationships remain outside the law.

THREATS TO LIFE

Domestic violence is dangerous. In 2015 there were **970 threats to kill women, children and family members** disclosed to Women's Aid. There were **579 additional disclosures of assaults with weapons, threats with weapons and being strangled and smothered**.

55% of women murdered in Ireland are killed by their **partners or ex-partners**.⁴

We know domestic violence can be fatal. Each woman murdered is an outrage. An absolute tragic loss of life and potential resulting in utter heartache for her loved ones left behind.

Based on 20 years of the Women's Aid Female Homicide Media Watch, we know that **211 women have been murdered in Ireland since 1996**. **62% of women were murdered in their own home**. **In resolved cases, 99% of perpetrators are men**.

Women's Aid believes that increased recognition and management of risk factors for intimate partner homicide would lead to an improved response to domestic abuse by the State and its agencies.

NEGOTIATING THE LEGAL SYSTEM

43% of the information, referral and advocacy work by the Helpline and One to One service in 2015 were in support of women accessing and negotiating the legal system for protection.

The current **waiting time** from making an application to hearing at Dolphin House is approximately **20 weeks**. These waiting times can leave women and children in vulnerable and dangerous situations. Women's Aid one to one support workers **went to court 239 times in 2015**.

HOUSING AND REFUGE

Housing and refuge is a significant element of the information, referral and advocacy service provided to women in 2015 (**16% of contacts**). The Women's Aid Helpline made **calls on behalf of women to local refuges** throughout the country on **701 occasions** in 2015. While emergency accommodation can be secured, often refuges are full and women and children are forced to return to dangerous home situations, sleep in cars or walk the streets.

Since 2013 there has been a **160% increase** in the application contribution for **Legal Aid (from €50 to €130)**. Many women simply can't afford this.⁵

2. FRA gender-based violence against women survey explorer 2012 available at <http://fra.europa.eu/DVS/DVT/vaw.php>
3. Domestic Abuse of Women and Men in Ireland, National Crime Council, 2005.

4. Women's Aid Female Homicide Media Watch 1996 to March 2016.
5. Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence announces changes to Civil Legal Aid, <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR13000338>.

WHAT WE DO

Listening. Believing. Supporting.

Women's Aid is the leading national organisation that has been working in Ireland to stop domestic violence against women and children since 1974.

We work to **make women and children safe from domestic violence** by **offering support to women & their families and friends**, **providing hope** to those affected by **abuse and working for justice and social change**.

**National
Freephone
Helpline**
1800 341 900

*Now a 24 hours,
7 days a week service.*

**One to One
Service**

*Safety Planning
Information
Advocacy
Referral*

“ Thank you for your support and kindness. I have regained my confidence and feel stronger every day.

I don't know where I would be without Women's Aid. ”

**Dolphin House Support
and Referral Service***

*Drop In Monday to Friday
9.30am to 1.30pm, 4th Floor*

**Court
Accompaniment
Service**

ALL SERVICES ARE
**Free, Confidential
& Non-judgemental**

We also work for JUSTICE & SOCIAL CHANGE by

- Raising awareness including campaigns and communications.
- Working for Positive Government Action
- Providing Specialised Training

See full Impact Report 2015 for details.

Thank you

Women's Aid is indebted to all our volunteers, supporters, funders and donors who make our work possible. In 2015 we continued to face many challenges, particularly financial ones. We are thankful for the generosity we receive from all our supporters. Without financial and fundraising support and the giving of time and expertise, we would not be able to provide vital support to women and children experiencing domestic violence.

*Run in partnership with Inchicore Outreach Centre and Dublin 12 Domestic Violence Service.

National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900

The Women's Aid Helpline is the only free, national, 24 hour domestic violence helpline with specialised trained staff, fully accredited by The Helplines Partnership. It is a specialist support service for women experiencing emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse by a current or former intimate partner. The Helpline provides vital support and information to individual callers and is a gateway to our other services and local refuges and support services around the country.

It became a **24 hours, 7 days a week** service from January 2016. Demand has been very high for our new 24 hours Helpline service. In the first three months of 2016, our **'out of hours' service (8pm to 8am) received 1408 calls** compared to 315 calls to the 'out of hours' voice messaging service (10pm to 10am) in the same period in 2015.

In 2015 our dedicated team of Helpline Volunteers gave a total of **2,772 hours** of their time supporting women on the Helpline.

Women's Aid vous offre son soutien et des informations dans 170 langues.

Cuireann Grúpa Cúnta na mBan tacaíocht agus eolas ar fáil i 170 teanga.

“Women's Aid (妇女救援)”使用 170 种语言，提供援助及咨询服务。

The Helpline can provide support in
170 LANGUAGES

Women's Aid ofrece apoyo e información en 170 idiomas.

Stowarzyszenie oferuje pomoc i informację w 170 językach.

تقدم جمعية مساعدة المرأة الدعم والمعلومات ب ١٧٠ لغة.

Organizația de Asistență pentru Femei oferă sprijin și informații în 170 de limbi straine.

Помощь женщинам» предлагает поддержку и информацию на 170 языках.

“ For the first time in my life I was able to tell someone what was happening. Women's Aid didn't judge or blame me.

They just listened. ”

**Women's Aid
Text Service**
FOR DEAF AND HARD
OF HEARING WOMEN
087 959 7980
8am to 8pm

The Helplines
Standard

Full Impact Report available to download at www.womensaid.ie



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Making Women and Children Safe

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Registered charity number 6491

Support our Work

Visit www.womensaid.ie/donate to make an immediate and secure donation.

Text the word **ACTION** to **50300** to donate **€4** to Women's Aid.

100% of your donation goes to Women's Aid across most network operators. Some operators apply VAT which means that a minimum of €3.25 will go to Women's Aid. Service Provider: LIKECHARITY.
Helpline: 0766805278.