

Women's Aid

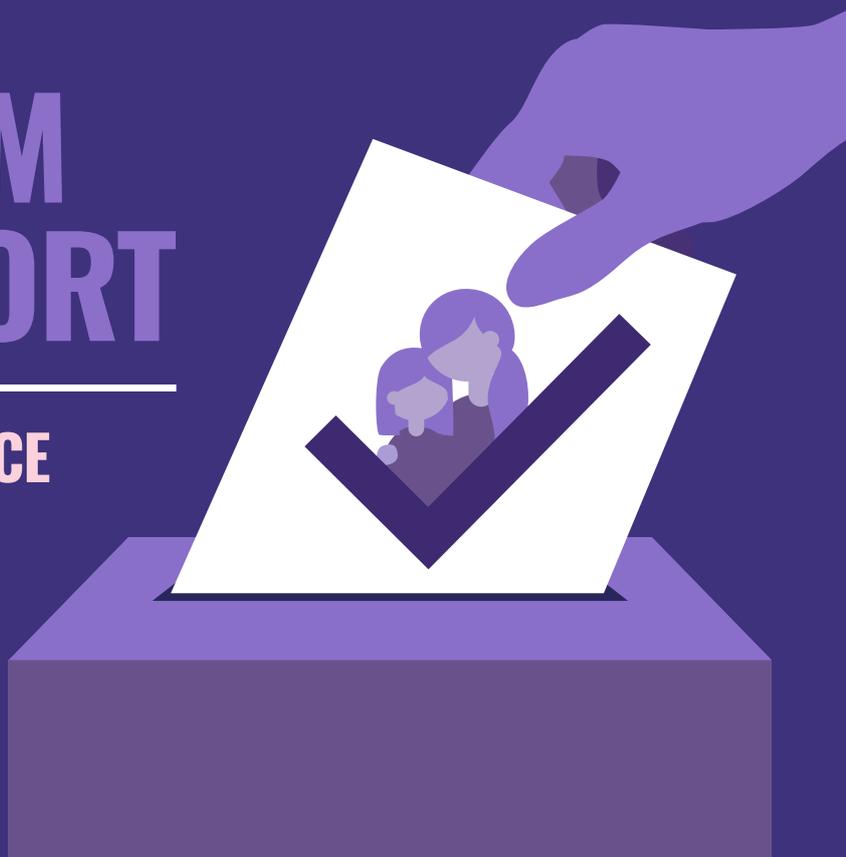
TRANSFORM AND SUPPORT

MAKE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE A PRIORITY IN #GE2020



WOMEN'S AID

Listening. Believing. Supporting.



INTRODUCTION



The forthcoming General Election is an important opportunity to improve supports for women and children experiencing domestic abuse¹ and to remove the barriers preventing them from moving on to better, safer lives. Much has been done in the last four years including ratifying the Istanbul Convention and enacting the Domestic Violence Act 2018. However, much remains to be done to make sure legislative progress is implemented in practice and that much needed resources are provided for specialised services assisting women experiencing domestic violence. A new and comprehensive approach to protect and support children impacted by domestic violence is also necessary.

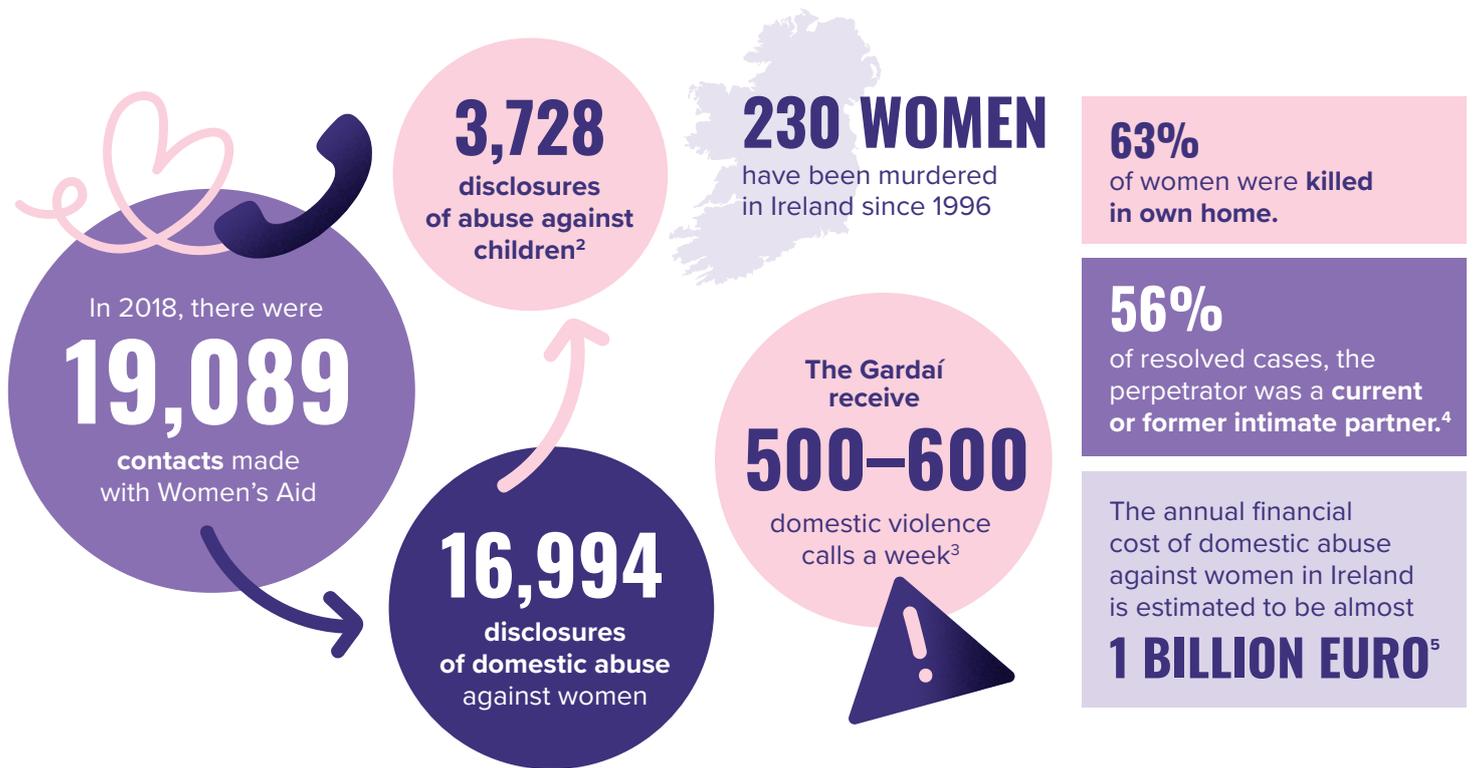
In this manifesto Women's Aid outlines what we want the next government to do to make sure everyone experiencing domestic violence gets the support they need. These actions are in line with the Istanbul Convention and the EU Victims' Directive. Domestic violence and abuse is a serious crime, one that can result in

stress, short and long term trauma and physical injuries and, in extreme cases, murder. 2020 needs to be a turning point for women and children affected by domestic violence. Whoever forms the next government and members of the next Dáil and Seanad, must take domestic violence against women and children seriously.

Sarah Benson, CEO, Women's Aid.

¹ While recognising that the legal term in Ireland is 'domestic violence' we acknowledge that many victims/survivors identify more with the term 'domestic abuse' or 'intimate partner violence'. Women's Aid uses these terms interchangeably in this manifesto to refer to the same set of abusive behaviours by current or former intimate partners (including emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse and coercive control).

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN IRELAND



10 PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT GOVERNMENT

- 1** Reform and resource the family law system across the country to ensure that family law proceedings are conducted in safe and appropriate circumstances, especially where there is domestic abuse, and prioritise the development of the Hammond Lane Family Court in Dublin 7.
- 2** Reform and resource the criminal justice system to make it responsive to the needs of survivors of domestic violence.
- 3** Provide adequate funding for specialist services responding to domestic abuse.
- 4** Enact legislation to criminalise cyber-stalking and image based sexual abuse, establish a Digital Safety Commissioner and provide support for victims.
- 5** Introduce statutory paid domestic violence leave in employment legislation.
- 6** Ensure that women and children escaping domestic abuse have priority access to long term and affordable accommodation.
- 7** Establish a Domestic Homicide Review Tribunal.
- 8** Provision of training on responding to domestic violence for staff in statutory agencies.
- 9** Ensure accurate data and statistics on domestic violence are collected and published.
- 10** Establish a statutory Maintenance Agency, separate from the family courts, to collect payments.

² Impact Report 2018, Women's Aid, April 2019, available at www.womensaid.ie/impact2018

³ Domestic Homicide 'Far Outstrips Gangland Killing' says Garda Commissioner", The Irish Times, 7th December 2019, available at <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/domestic-homicides-far-outstrip-gangland-murder-says-commissioner-1.4107348>

⁴ Women's Aid Femicide Watch Report (Republic of Ireland) 2019 available at www.womensaid.ie.

⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality, Estimating the Cost of Gender Based Violence in the European Union, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2014 (estimate by extrapolation from UK case by population size).