



# Teenhelp

menu

## Domestic Abuse - What is domestic abuse?

### Q. What is domestic abuse?

**A.** Domestic abuse (or domestic violence) is when abuse or violence is used by one person to hurt, bully, or control another person in a relationship.

Domestic abuse is more often used by men against women, but it can also be used by women against men. It can also happen in same sex relationships between gay or lesbian couples. Domestic abuse can happen in relationships where couples are married, living together, going out with each other or even living apart.

It is often a pattern that starts early in a relationship and gets worse over time.

It can be:

- **Physical** - hitting, punching, pushing, hair-pulling, shaking, kicking, strangling or using weapons.
- **Sexual** - being forced to have sex at times or in ways you do not want to, being raped.
- **Emotional** - being put down, cursed at or criticised, being called abusive names or being threatened. Not being allowed to see or have contact with friends or family. Being forced to stay silent about the abuse.
- **Financial** - not being allowed to have or to manage money.

It can also be things like harassment and intimidation such as stalking, making abusive phone calls, emails or texts.

### Q. How much does domestic abuse happen?

**A.** It happens a lot. A study in Ireland in 2005 found that 1 in 7 women and 1 in 16 men had experienced abuse from a partner at some time in their lives. ([www.crimecouncil.ie](http://www.crimecouncil.ie))

Other research has found that domestic abuse happens even more than that - in about 20% of families. However, as domestic abuse is usually hidden within families and relationships, it's true extent it probably not fully known.

### Q. Are some people more likely to be abused than others are?

A.

- Women are more likely to be abused than men. Irish research (in 2005) found that women were:
  - Twice as likely to experience physical abuse.
  - Three times more likely to experience emotional abuse.
  - Seven times more likely to experience sexual abuse.
  - Twice as likely to need medical treatment.
  - Ten times more have to stay in a hospital.
- Children and young people who live in families where domestic abuse happens are more likely to be abused themselves than other children or young people.
- Adults whose parents were abusive have more than double the chance of being abused themselves.
- Abuse is more likely when people are isolated from family and neighbourhood supports.
- People who have a serious disability are almost three times more likely than others to experience serious abuse.
- People, particularly women, who are members of minority groups such as Travellers, immigrants or other groups and who experience domestic abuse may be more isolated and find it harder to get help and support.

Q.

**If it's so common, why do more people not know about it?**

*One of the best ways to stop experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse is to tell someone you trust, who can help you.*

A.

Like a lot of abuse, domestic abuse tends to happen in secret. Often people who are abused are afraid or ashamed to tell anybody. Sometimes abusers use threats to make them keep it a secret.

One of the best ways to stop experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse is to tell someone you trust, who can help you.