

## **Women's Aid: Annual Impact Report 2024** **(<https://www.activelink.ie/node/116412>)**



### **Record number of contacts with and disclosures of domestic abuse to Women's Aid in 2024**

- In 2024, Women's Aid national and regional frontline services were contacted 32,144 times, an increase of 12% on 2023. These are the highest contact rates in the organisation's 50-year history.
- The 24-hour National Freephone Helpline alone received 24,396 contacts, a 17% increase on the previous year.
- Women's Aid's frontline teams heard a total of 46,765 disclosures of incidents of domestic violence and abuse including 41,432 disclosures against women and 5,333 disclosures of abuse against children. An overall increase of 17% on 2023.
- There were increased reports of all forms of abuse against women: physical (+22%), Sexual (+30%), Emotional (+15%) and Economic abuse (+5%).
- 33% of women in contact with Women's Aid services in 2024 were being subjected to domestic abuse from their ex-partner, confirming the harsh reality that for many victims of abuse, ending the relationship does not end the abuse.
- Serious challenges with the family justice system, post separation abuse and the housing crisis impacts on victim-survivors' abilities to access justice and safety, with greater challenges for those with disabilities and migrant backgrounds.
- Resourcing by Government and implementation of the Third National Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Strategy, through coherent cross government co-operation, remains crucial to effectively reduce the scale and impacts of violence against women and children in Ireland.

Women's Aid, a leading national organisation supporting victims-survivors of domestic abuse, reveals that it has recorded the highest level of both contacts by victim-survivors and disclosures of domestic abuse in its 50-years history. The Women's Aid Annual Impact Report 2024 outlines 46,765 disclosures with its National Freephone Helpline and Regional Face-to-Face services during 32,144 contacts last year. This represents an 12% increase in contacts and a 17% increase in disclosures compared to the previous year: the highest ever recorded by the organisation.

Last year, women told Women's Aid that their partners or ex-partners were subjecting them to a broad and brutal pattern of abuse. Women reported assaults with weapons, constant surveillance, and monitoring, relentless put downs and humiliations, the taking and sharing of intimate images online, complete control over all family finances, sexual assault, rape and being threatened with theirs or their children's lives. The impacts on these women were chilling and ranged from exhaustion, isolation, and hopelessness to serious injury, suffering miscarriages, poverty, feeling a loss of identity and suicide ideation, hypervigilance, and homelessness.

#### **Sarah Benson, Chief Executive Officer of Women's Aid says:**

"The number and nature of the disclosures of abuse to our frontline services is utterly appalling. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg. Thirty five percent of women in Ireland (one in three) suffer physical, psychological or sexual abuse from an intimate partner. Additionally, there are so many children, families and whole communities also impacted. Fear, stigma, and the debilitating impact of the abuse itself – but also persisting social attitudes to domestic violence – prevent victims from coming forward. So many victim-survivors lack the information or confidence to contact specialist services, and about one third will suffer in total isolation, telling nobody what is happening to them. We still have so much work to do to break this silence to encourage those in need to get the support they deserve. What we hear in our national and regional services is replicated across Ireland in local domestic abuse refuges and organisations."

#### **Eavan Ward, Head of Regional Services at Women's Aid adds:**

"Every day women are being hurt and abused by the person who is supposed to love them. The person closest to them. Last year, 33% of women in contact with our services were being subjected to domestic abuse from their ex-partner, confirming the harsh reality that for many victims of abuse, ending the relationship does not end the abuse. Separating from

a controlling and abusive partner is difficult and a time of heightened risk. Many women have children with their abuser and needed to access the Courts in relation to children's matters. Both Women's Aid's on the ground experience and new national research show that the family law system is failing many women and children. The process is prolonged, costly and dis-empowering. It often results in unsafe custody and access arrangements which disregard the impact of domestic abuse including coercive control on children. The safety of the protective parent, usually the mother, and also the risks to children are frequently not risk assessed or even considered in custody and access proceedings."

As it launches its Annual Impact Report for 2024 today, Women's Aid notes that the operating environment remains challenging with specialist services still overstretched and underfunded, challenging capacity to meet an increasing demand for help. This is especially true for more marginalised and minoritised women. The housing crisis, the lack of visibility of domestic abuse in national Housing Strategy and plans, and dearth of appropriate specialist accommodation provision for survivors of abuse limits options for a safe home in the medium and long term. The Family Law 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.

In addition, young women report very high levels of intimate partner and other forms of gender-based violence, which sadly does not seem to be decreasing. There is a continuing increase in online/technology facilitated gender-based violence. This includes the harm of online pornography on efforts for gender equality, on the development of healthy sexuality and relationships, and on levels of coercion and violence. In the face of increasing understanding and evidence of the negative impact on young people's behaviour and experiences, there continues to be little meaningful accountability for online hosting/ facilitating platforms and perpetrators.

Women's Aid is also concerned about the inconsistent response from members of An Garda Síochána.

### **Sarah Benson explains:**

"An Garda Síochána is also seeing record domestic violence and abuse contacts including over 65,000 contacts last year. There is excellent progress in some areas such as the National Protective Services Bureau, who partner with Women's Aid in delivery of a lifesaving High-Risk Support project. However, we are also seeing the results of a knowledge gap increasing among new recruits, and members in local stations where members of the public most connect with police for assistance. 44% of women told us that they found the Gardaí response unhelpful when they sought support. It is imperative that specialist training on the dynamics of domestic abuse and awareness of new legislation such as stalking, is re-established as a core part of training for all members, not just those in specialist units.

During 2024 Women's Aid also published landmark new research on disabled women and intimate partner abuse, and on the harms of pornography to children, healthy sexuality and gender equality. It also continues to call on all employers in Ireland to ensure domestic abuse is a workplace issue and promotes the free open-source resource at [www.dvatwork.ie](http://www.dvatwork.ie) (<http://www.dvatwork.ie/>) which the organisation was commissioned to develop to help all workplaces implement statutory paid domestic violence leave.

### **Ms Benson highlights:**

"Domestic abuse doesn't occur in some dark corner. It is endemic in all aspects of our society. If we want to stop harm before it happens, we need to be an equal society with zero tolerance of domestic abuse. Our report may read like bad news but there is also hope, survival and many examples of co-ordinated efforts between statutory, civil society organisations, individual supporters and survivors to continue to accelerate positive change. Women's Aid cannot do it alone. We need champions in our society to end abuse. In government, in civil society, but also in our workplaces, communities, schools and homes. We need men to lead as allies in prevention of male violence. Only by changing our attitudes to male violence against women can we create an Ireland where women, and men, can feel safe and supported, now and in the future."

### **Ms Benson continues:**

"To achieve a positive outcome, we must ensure all the key drivers of success are attended to so we can assure all victim-survivors rights are vindicated. We need to support new generations where respect and equality is the norm for all relationships by continuing to develop our primary prevention with age-appropriate education for children and young people on healthy boundaries, and mutual respect and ensure relationships and sexuality education that critically addresses the harmful influence of pornography."

### **Ms. Benson concludes:**

"The government is continuing to implement the Third National Domestic Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Strategy, under the co-ordination of CUAN, the National Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency. The plan is

structured around the four key components that will help truly eradicate male violence against women: prevention, protection, prosecution/access to justice, and crucially policy co-ordination across all of Government to realise the ambition of zero tolerance of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. No matter what the economic or geopolitical environment we are entering, the Government must persevere with its efforts and deliver on these ambitions. We need to break this generational cycle of inequality and abuse.”

## Support Information

- Women’s Aid 24-hour National Freephone helpline 1800 341 900 [www.womensaid.ie](http://www.womensaid.ie/) (<http://www.womensaid.ie/>)
- National Male Advice Line 1800 816 588 <https://mensnetwork.ie/mal/> (<https://mensnetwork.ie/mal/>)

## Relevant Documents

- Annual Impact Report 2024 – Part 1 (<https://www.womensaid.ie/app/uploads/2025/06/Womens-Aid-Annual-Impact-Report-Part-1.pdf>) & Part 2 (<https://www.womensaid.ie/app/uploads/2025/06/Womens-Aid-Annual-Impact-Report-Part-2.pdf>)
- Annual Impact Report 2024 – Executive Summary (<https://www.womensaid.ie/app/uploads/2025/06/Womens-Aid-Annual-Impact-Report-2024-Executive-Summary.pdf>)

### Region

Nationwide

[Annual Impact Report 2024 – Executive Summary](https://www.womensaid.ie/app/uploads/2025/06/Womens-Aid-Annual-Impact-Report-2024-Executive-Summary.pdf) (<https://www.womensaid.ie/app/uploads/2025/06/Womens-Aid-Annual-Impact-Report-2024-Executive-Summary.pdf>)

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