

About SAFE Ireland

SAFE Ireland is the national social change agency working on domestic violence in Ireland. We are working innovatively and strategically to transform culture and the response to gender-based violence (GBV) in Ireland. Our particular GBV focus is on male violence against women and children in intimate/close relationships.

We have evolved from a network of service providers and continue to work in close collaboration with 39 frontline domestic violence services across communities in Ireland. Over the past 10 years we have invested in leadership, governance, research and organisational development to create a culture in the services that allows space for dialogue, creativity and innovation.

We are directly linked to women and children who experience domestic violence. We work to bring public voice and understanding to the causes and impact of domestic violence.

We respond to thousands of women and children affected by domestic violence in Ireland every year.

For more information on how you can help contact:



#FaceUpTo
**Domestic
Violence**

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SAFE Ireland – Election 2016 **Manifesto**

#FaceUpToDomesticViolence

Face up to the reality

Domestic Violence is more widespread than we think.

In 2014, our most recent annual statistics, nearly 9,500 women and over 3,000 children received support or accommodation from a domestic violence service in Ireland.

- That's over 12,500 people looking for safety. In one year.
- It's shocking. It's depressing. But it's just the tip of the iceberg.

Most incidences of domestic violence are not even reported.

Domestic violence is the most under-reported, largely undocumented and certainly unprosecuted crime in the country. It is a crime perpetrated mostly against women (90%)¹. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) conducted an EU-wide study in 2014² and found that 79% of women in Ireland who had experienced physical or sexual violence had never reported the most serious incident. Evidence suggests only about 8-12% of women experiencing domestic violence ever contact a domestic violence service.

Their silence is our responsibility. Their invisibility is what we must face up to.



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Face up to the consequences

Domestic violence destroys lives.

Domestic violence has a devastating affect on everyone it touches – women, men, families and communities. In Ireland, since 1996, 63% of murdered women (130) have been killed in their own homes. In the resolved cases, 84 women (55%) were murdered by a partner or ex-partner³.

Domestic violence is one of the major causes of mental health issues.

Women who live with domestic violence are much more likely to experience depression and anxiety. One study of Irish general practices found that 67% of women who were depressed had experienced domestic violence and/or sexual violence⁴. Women living with abuse are at greater risk of suicide attempts, psychosomatic disorders, and physical injuries. The trauma of domestic violence can last years after a woman has left a relationship.

Domestic violence makes families homeless.

Women and children are a unique group within the homeless sector as they are fleeing crimes. But our housing legislation does not recognise this. And the housing crisis is making the situation even worse. The rent allowance gap and housing shortage means women can't find safe, affordable housing. Many are forced to stay in refuge for months – so emergency accommodation is not then free for others fleeing abuse.

Domestic violence shatters childhoods.

Children are victims of domestic violence either because they are abused themselves or because they are innocent witnesses of abuse. Growing up in a violent household can stunt a child's development and their life chances as adults.

#FaceUpToDomesticViolence

Face up to our collective role

Our society is our responsibility.

We can face up to our sense of communal humanity, of how we want to be measured as a nation. Election 2016 is taking place in a special year of historical significance. It is a year in which we can take stock of the state we are in, the way we treat people and particularly the way we treat those who are most vulnerable and most in need of our support and help.

Our agreement is useless without action.

If there is one issue that all political parties in this election agree on it is the need to address domestic violence. There have been welcome developments in policy, legislation, awareness and recognition of the complexity of domestic violence.

This work must continue. We can strive to make Ireland the safest place for women and children.

“Domestic violence is the most under-reported, largely undocumented and certainly unprosecuted crime in the country.”

1. United States Department of Justice.
2. Violence against women: An EU-wide survey. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), 2014.
3. Women's Aid Female Homicide Media Watch, March 2015.
4. Bradley, F., Smith, M., Long, J., O'Dowd, T., (2002).

Face Up To leadership

We are asking you to Face Up to Domestic Violence and make it a defining issue in the new Programme for Government.

We are calling for your leadership and commitment, **within the first 100 Days of the next Government** to ensure these **three crucial actions** become a reality for women and children.

1. **Allocate an additional €30 million annually** (from 2017) to address immediate gaps in our struggling services, from the Garda, to specialist domestic violence services, to the provision of safe housing. This will also allow for vital education and prevention work, research, and training to help us face up to domestic violence.
2. **Appoint a Minister and Department** to spearhead a determined, whole of Government response to the complexity of domestic violence, from health to education to justice. We also need the establishment of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Domestic Violence, already promised.
3. **Enact new legislation on domestic violence and victims rights**, with a commitment to look at the definition of domestic violence as a matter of urgency. Heads of these Bills were introduced in 2015 but they have not progressed since.

SAFE Ireland has a comprehensive strategy to transform the response to domestic violence – to make Ireland the safest place for women and children. These three steps are simply the beginning.

But if you and your party commit to these three powerful actions in the first 100 days, you will be sending a very powerful message to thousands of women and children in every city town and village in Ireland. A message they have been waiting to hear for years.

You will be telling them that, finally, their government, their country and their fellow citizens are prepared to Face Up to Domestic Violence.