

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SPEAK UP ABOUT IT!

IT'S NOT A PRIVATE MATTER!

Violence against women is not uncommon and can affect anyone – regardless of age, level of education, income or family background.

IT MAKES YOU ILL!

Women affected not only suffer from visible physical injuries, but also from the psychological effects and their long-term consequences.

THERE IS HELP!

No woman has to endure violence. Doctors, counseling centers, women's shelters, the police and the justice system can help you get out of a violent situation.





» In Germany, a woman becomes the victim of domestic violence every 45 minutes.

This is an alarmingly high number and it shows that our own four walls far too frequently become a dangerous place, a prison filled with fear and shame.

Violence against women is an issue that concerns us all. We can all help to ensure that violence against women is recognised as early as possible and that women get help quickly.

If you are the victim of domestic violence or you know someone who is in this situation, get in touch with your doctor. They can help to address the physical and psychological pain – and they can offer advice on further sources of help. «

Franziska Giffey
Federal Minister for Family Affairs,
Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

VIOLENCE HAS MANY FACES

Domestic violence – regardless of where the crime is committed – includes all forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs between adults who are or were in a close relationship with each other. In particular, this includes people who are related to each other or who live together.

The place where the crime is committed may be your own home, but also your place of work, public places, the daycare centre etc.

Domestic violence mainly affects women and is usually committed by men. It ranges from physical attacks such as pushing or hitting to forced sexual acts and psychological violence such as humiliation, stalking, constant control or insults by one's partner.

Many women feel ashamed because of the violence they experience, they feel guilty and find it difficult to talk about their experiences. This means that serious health consequences and effects often remain hidden from doctors too. This can lead to incorrect treatment being given as the doctor will not be aware of the link between a chronic complaint and the violence being experienced by the patient, and this situation may persist for a period of several years.

Violence can affect women of all ages and from all sections of the population.

In Germany...

- **25 percent** of women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a **current or former partner**.
- **13 percent** of women over the age of 16 have experienced criminally relevant forms of **sexual violence**.
- **42 percent** of women have experienced **psychological violence**, such as intimidation, slander, threats or psychological terrorisation.
- violence against women is mainly committed by a **partner or ex-partner** in the domestic sphere.
- a total of **141,792 persons were victims of violence at the hands of their partner** in 2019; of these, almost 81 percent were women.
- women in **separation or divorce situations** are particularly vulnerable to violence by their (ex-)partner.
- **women with disabilities and impairments** are more exposed to all forms of violence throughout their lifetime than women in the general population.
- **during the coronavirus lockdown** from March 2020 onwards, **the women who were most likely to be the victims of violence** were those who were self-isolating at home, whose families were in financial difficulties, whose partners were suffering from anxiety or depression, and who had children under the age of ten living in their household.

Sources:

The Living Conditions, Safety and Health of Women in Germany – results of the representative study on violence against women in Germany (Müller/Schröttle, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, 2013)

Violence at the Hands of a Partner. Criminal Evaluation. Reporting year 2019 (Federal Criminal Police Office, 2020)

Living Conditions and Stress Factors for Women with Disabilities and Impairments in Germany (Schröttle/Hornberg, 2013)

Violence against Women and Children in Germany during the COVID-19-related Restrictions on Leaving the Home (Steinert/Ebert, 2020)

VIOLENCE HAS MANY FORMS

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Holding, pushing, hitting, kicking, choking, strangling, injuring with weapons/objects, withholding food, sleep deprivation, etc.

SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE

Sexualized language, forcing the victim to watch pornography, forcing/coercing them into sexual acts, rape etc.

VERBAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Insults, humiliation, threats, calling them mad, using children as leverage etc.

SOCIAL VIOLENCE

Forbidding contact, controlling, social isolation, taking away car/bike (keys)/ticket, imprisonment etc.

DIGITAL VIOLENCE

Using digital media to insult another person, embarrass them, swear at them, blackmail them or threaten them etc.

ECONOMIC VIOLENCE

Allocating or withholding money in small amounts, forbidding or forcing the victim to work etc.

Sources:
www.gobsis.de/thema-gewalt/haeusliche-gewalt
www.staerker-als-gewalt.de



“NO LONGER BEING ABLE TO TRUST ANYBODY ...”

- Paula, 34

My boyfriend and I had been together for a long time and were very happy about our first daughter Laura. A happy little family – we did so much and got on well. However, after the pregnancy I only very rarely wanted to have sex. This had nothing to do with my feelings for him and, in order to avoid rejecting him, I usually played along. Nevertheless: He knew of course that I wasn't really interested and one night I didn't want to have sex so I refused. He went berserk and pushed me onto the bed, held my wrists until it hurt and forced me to sleep with him.

At that time, I thought that perhaps it was somehow just part of it, but it happened more often that he became brutal and forced me to have sex. I was ashamed, began to drink and of course all of this didn't go over Laura's head either. When I went to the gynaecologist for my routine check-up, she recognised the signs. She asked me about the bruises on my arms and between my legs and I completely broke down. Finally, I was able to confide in someone. Today I know that my boyfriend had raped me. But it was only through the attention of my doctor that I was able to find the strength to leave my boyfriend. Today I am so grateful that she didn't turn a blind eye back then and that I was able to find trust and support.



“HOW WRONG YOU CAN BE ABOUT A PERSON ...”

- Simone, 26

In our relationship, Robert was always very courteous, he could read my every wish and we were always there for each other. Then, out of the blue, he suddenly broke up with me, without saying what was wrong. I was shocked as we were always so honest with each other. After some time, he wanted me back. But this was no longer possible for me as the trust was gone. Robert called several times a day, stood outside my front door and kept ringing the doorbell at night. At the start we were still on speaking terms but he became more and more insistent. If I went out, he would suddenly be there, even though I always sought out different venues. He was constantly writing comments on Facebook and posting pictures online. I was no longer able to keep up with blocking him on all media. I felt I was being watched all the time and had the feeling that I was no longer able to move about freely. Not only did he call family and friends, he even called my workplace – and I got in trouble with my boss. That was the turning point: I went to the police.



“I DIDN’T UNDERSTAND THE WORLD ANYMORE ...”

• Charlotte, 63

My husband had always enjoyed a few drinks extra at family celebrations or festive occasions. But after he was forced into early retirement, he started coming home drunk from the pub on the corner more and more often. I ignored it at first because I thought he would straighten himself out again. If he established a routine in his everyday life and found a task, everything would be okay. But the evenings when he drank three, four or five bottles of beer became the rule and not the exception. One evening, I had had enough and it just burst out of me: “Can’t you do something other than drink?!” Initially, he was shocked and insulted and then he became aggressive, jumped up and shook me until I lost my balance and fell to the floor. I didn’t understand the world anymore. What had become of the man I married 40 years ago and had loved so much? He was extremely embarrassed about it, he couldn’t look me in the eye and shied away from confrontation. But I couldn’t keep it bottled up inside and sought out a therapist. Now my husband and I see a couples therapist together and my husband is also attending a course for violent men and is trying to get his alcohol problem under control. Yes, I pulled the emergency brake in time; but not every woman manages to do so. I know this from my weekly meeting with women affected by violence.



“HE GOT MORE AND MORE AGGRESSIVE OVER THE COURSE OF THE LOCKDOWN ...”

• Janine, 28

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, the situation in our family wasn’t easy. We have two small children and a really small flat, so things can get quite stressful sometimes. But when we were all at home the whole time during lockdown, I noticed that my husband just couldn’t cope with the situation. He started to get more and more aggressive and we had a lot of arguments. On top of that, we had financial problems and he was worried about losing his job. I remember once we had a difference of opinion, actually it was about something really trivial. But the argument escalated, and then he pushed me so violently that I fell over and injured my head. First of all, I thought it was just a one-off, and we avoided talking about what had happened. But then, a couple of days later, my husband got annoyed about something really minor, and he grabbed me hard by my shoulders and pushed me against the wall. After this, he often hit me or kicked me, sometimes even in front of the children. I was frightened all the time and I couldn’t sleep. In the end, my neighbour brought up the subject because she noticed that something wasn’t right. I broke down in tears and told her everything. She gave me the phone number of an advice centre and I called them.

“I DIDN’T EVEN KNOW HIM ...”

• Özlem, 40

I am glad to be here. I sit in a small room, somewhat sparsely furnished perhaps. My gaze falls on the small case that I had left with a good friend of mine for so long. Our district’s Equal Opportunities Officer advised me to do so. Yesterday evening, the time had come. My husband hit me again – harder than usual. I was in fear of my life. I called the police and was brought to the women’s shelter. What had happened?! As a little girl, I dreamed of becoming a doctor and of helping people. On my 16th birthday, this dream was over. That day, my father told me that he had found a man for me and I was now engaged. I didn’t even know him. Even before our wedding, my husband was very domineering but it got really bad afterwards. I was not allowed to go out alone and always had to be accompanied by a family member. In the beginning, I tried to stand up for myself. Then my husband grabbed me and pushed me to the floor. He often took his bad moods out on me. Sometimes he pushed me against the wall or hit me in the face. The move to the women’s shelter was essential. I cannot expect help from my family. They think that it is up to the husband to decide whether and how he is to punish his wife.



ADVICE AND HELP FOR WOMEN



**Interview with
Petra Söchting
Director of the helpline**

What kind of violence have women experienced when they call the helpline?

Women call us for a wide range of different reasons. They may be in a situation of acute danger, in which case it will be a matter of deciding whether tangible help needs to be organised (police, ambulance). Or it may be, for example, that they want to talk about a violent situation that has been going on for some time. The range of situations we encounter are very varied, which means the advice we offer has to be individually tailored to each specific case.

How can you help women in concrete terms?

The first step is for the advisor to take the time to really listen. Each case is treated individually, so she will talk to the caller and they will decide together what kind of support would be best for her. There are no standard solutions. It is very important that the woman decides for herself whether action is to be taken and, if so, what should be done. She is in control of the situation and nothing will happen without her consent. As a next step, they look at possible solutions together.

Anonymity and confidentiality are considered very important on the helpline. Why?

We know how difficult it is for women who have experienced violence to seek help at all. Studies have shown that only around 20 percent of affected women in fact do so. The "Violence against women" helpline provides an easy-to-access service with its guarantee of anonymity, as this is often something that women want to be sure of, especially when they get in touch for the first time. Those who call the helpline can decide for themselves what and how much they want to disclose in terms of their personal details and their story. The advisors will not ask them for any details and will not pass on any information to anyone else.

How has the situation changed during the coronavirus pandemic? Are you getting more calls?

The number of people contacting us to ask for advice increased by around 20 percent during the period from April to November

The nationwide helpline "Violence against women" provides advice over the phone, via chat or e-mail, on the number **08000 116 016** or via the website www.hilfetelefon.de. The advice offered is anonymous, free-of-charge and available in 17 languages. It is the only nationwide service that is available around the clock to help victims of violence. The provision of the service is ensured by more than 80 qualified advisors from the Federal Office for Family Affairs and Civil Society Tasks (BAFzA). The helpline "Violence against women" is run by Petra Söchting.

2020, both by phone and online. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that there has been an actual increase in cases of domestic violence. Since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis, we have had a lot more publicity as a first point of contact for victims of domestic violence and this has led to more people finding out about the services we offer and making use of them.

How can people help if, for example, they suspect that there is a violent situation within their family or in their circle of friends?

It's best to avoid giving suggestions or tips, as this can often make the victim feel even more under pressure. You should listen to them and acknowledge the fact that, for many people, it's a huge step even just to talk to someone. It's important to make it clear that you are there to offer support whenever needed. Then you can perhaps work together to consider what kind of help they would like to be offered and what might be possible. It is absolutely crucial that you never undertake anything without the consent of the affected person – they should be the one who decides what happens next.



THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE BEING GIVEN ADVICE HAS INCREASED SINCE THE HELPLINE WAS SET UP IN MARCH 2013

In our first year, we offered advice to just under 19,000 callers; by 2019 the figure was almost 45,000. In total, since 2013, we have given advice to around 230,000 people who were seeking help – on the phone, via chat or via e-mail. Nine percent of all advice sessions were held online. The majority of those who made the call were the ones affected by violence themselves (130,500 persons). The service was also used by more than 46,000 persons from the social network of the affected person or by professionals. Advice was offered on all types of violence. Domestic violence was the reason for the call in around 58 percent of cases. In 113,000 cases, the advisors referred those seeking help to local organisations; of these, 82 percent were referred to advice centres or women's shelters.

ZERO TOLERANCE OF VIOLENCE: YOUR RIGHTS!

Violence will not be tolerated by the state and is punishable by law. First and foremost, protection of the victim and the principle of 'anyone who hits must go – the victim remains in the home' is comprehensively regulated in the Protection against Violence Act (GewSchG).

Call the police if you or someone else is being threatened! Give your name and address and make it clear that you need help immediately. The police can issue an order to prevent the perpetrator from entering your home for a number of days. They have to step in straight away if they are informed of a case of domestic violence.

In the case of severe violence, you can immediately apply for protection against violence through the district court. For a limited period of time (usually several months), the perpetrator is forbidden from living in the shared home or approaching or contacting the victim.

There are also other civil protection options for the victims of violence, such as damages and compensation for pain and suffering.



Protect your child!

Children who witness a parent being mistreated, beaten up or threatened by a partner or ex-partner often bear psychological scars and in many cases also show physical symptoms, such as insomnia or difficulties with concentration. The development and health of your child can be permanently affected in the long term due to the experience of violence. The impact varies depending on whether the children witness acts of violence or are themselves mistreated, how long it has been since they experienced this violence and what measures were taken to resolve the acute situation. The age and gender of the child and their relationship with the adult also play a role. Children exposed to violence are at a higher risk of later experiencing violence at the hand of a partner. Through support and help your child can overcome the experience.



MEN WHO COMMIT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ARE PATHETIC.

Differences of opinion, dealing with conflicts and even arguing are part and parcel of a relationship. But there are lines that should never – I repeat, never! – be crossed. Physical integrity is one of these lines. There is no excuse for violence against women.

Unfortunately, women often tend to blame themselves. "But I provoked him, he had had a hard day, I have to make more effort, I shouldn't answer back etc." Enduring violence and then still finding excuses for him is not the right way. Women should not rely on this being a one-off slip. His – sometimes even tearful – apologies will not help you.

Once this line has been crossed, it will happen again. The inhibition threshold decreases. Don't be a victim. You are not to blame.

Definitely get help from outside, because one thing I have unfortunately learned too often in my role as a patron of the "Strong networks against violence: No violence against women and girls!" campaign by the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB) is that: The physical wounds heal at some point, but the psychological wounds never disappear. They define and often destroy a whole life. Those who experience violence should not have to bear it alone.

These crimes – and this is what they are – are usually committed within your own four walls; where you should feel safe. And if this violence is committed by a person that you love and trust, it is twice as traumatic. Trust and affection are destroyed.

Do not hesitate to open up. There is help! As a patron of the DOSB campaign, I fully endorse this under the motto: "Zero tolerance of violence against women and girls: You are. We are. Together we are strong!"

Regina Halmich
Boxing world champion and patron of the DOSB campaign
"Strong networks against violence:
No violence against women and girls!"



Who can I turn to?

No woman has to deal with violence on her own! Help is available, for example from:

- the police (110)
- the court system
- our helpline
- a doctor
- advice centres
- women's refuges and shelters

The various points of contact continue to be available during the coronavirus pandemic and during lockdown. By wearing a mask and maintaining a safe distance, you can protect yourself and others, whilst nevertheless making use of the one-to-one help and advice that is on offer.

Is there anything else I can do?

- Ask a person you trust to come and see you or call you regularly.
- Confide in a doctor.
- Allow your injuries to be documented in a way that will stand up in court as evidence of the frequency and severity of the injuries.
- Leave your mobile phone in a specific room so you can get help in case of emergency.
- Leave a suitcase with important documents and perhaps some essential clothing with a person you trust.
- Find out about special codes that can be used to let people know about your situation without anyone else realising, e.g. at the pharmacy or during a video call.

 **HILFE TELEFON**
GEWALT GEGEN FRAUEN

08000 116 016

WE CAN BE REACHED 365 DAYS A YEAR, 24 HOURS A DAY:

- The "Violence against women" helpline is manned 24 hours a day.
- We offer anonymous and free-of-charge advice, on the number 08000 116 016 or via an online advice session, to persons affected by violence or to their relatives, people who are close to the victim, or to professionals.
- We can offer safe and secure advice sessions via chat or e-mail through our website: www.hilfetelefon.de
- Our qualified advisors offer help and support to callers and, if requested to do so, they can refer them to support services in their local area. We can also organise an interpreter if required, in one of 17 languages.
- For women with a disability, we are able to offer advice in simple language and in German sign language.

www.hilfetelefon.de

USEFUL LINKS

www.aktiongegengewalt.dosb.de

Website for the campaign „Strong networks against violence!“ which was set up by the German Olympic Sports Confederation to offer self-defence courses.

www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/themen/gleichstellung/frauen-vor-gewalt-schuetzen

Website of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, offering further information on the subject of violence against women, as well as various external links.

www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de

Website of the Federal Association of Women's Advisory Services and Women's Emergency Helplines.

www.frauenberatungsstelle.de/pdf/NUR_MUT.pdf

Information on possible courses of action for women in violent relationships.

www.frauenhauskoordinierung.de

Information portal of the women's refuges with a regional search function.

www.gesine-intervention.de

Information for women affected by violence.

www.gewaltschutz.info

Information for affected persons on getting protection against violence and on their rights.

www.polizei-beratung.de/startseite-und-aktionen/aktuelles/detailansicht/coronapandemie-deeskalation-in-zeiten-von-isolierung-und-quarantaene

Tips on living together during the coronavirus pandemic.

www.staerker-als-gewalt.de

Website of the national initiative „Stronger than violence“ which was set up by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

www.telefonseelsorge.de

Anonymous advice available on the phone, via chat or in person for people in all kinds of difficult situations.

www.weisser-ring.de

Information, advice and help for the victims of violence.

www.zanzu.de

Online portal of the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA), with information on sexual/reproductive health in 13 languages.

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