

# RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



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For “It’s Time To Talk” Campaign

A Joint Project of Bankstown and Canterbury City Councils and  
Domestic Violence Liaison Committees

# Domestic Violence in Australia



**Violence  
against women:  
key statistics**

Research from the 2012 ABS Personal Safety Survey and Australian Institute of Criminology shows that both men and women in Australia experience substantial levels of violence.

Domestic and sexual violence is overwhelmingly committed by men against women.

89 women were killed by their current or former partner between 2008-10. *This equates to nearly one woman every week.*

# Violence against women: key statistics

Research from the 2012 ABS Personal Safety Survey shows that both men and women in Australia experience substantial levels of violence.

Australian women are most likely to experience physical and sexual violence in their home, at the hands of a male current or ex-partner.



36% of women had experienced physical or sexual violence from someone they knew.



15% of women had experienced physical or sexual violence from an ex-partner (the most likely type of known perpetrator for a female victim).



For 62% of the women who had experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator, the most recent incident was in their home.

## Women's experiences of violence

Australian women are most likely to experience physical and sexual violence in their home, at the hands of a male current or ex-partner. Of women who had experienced violence from an ex-partner:



73% had experienced more than one incident of violence.



61% had children in their care when the violence occurred, including 48% who stated the children had seen and heard the violence.



58% had never contacted the police.



24% had never sought advice or support.



Australian women are more likely to be sexually assaulted by a person they know than a stranger. Young women are particularly vulnerable to sexual assault.

Of all Australian women, 15% had been sexually assaulted by a person they knew, since the age of 15. 3.8% had been sexually assaulted by a stranger.



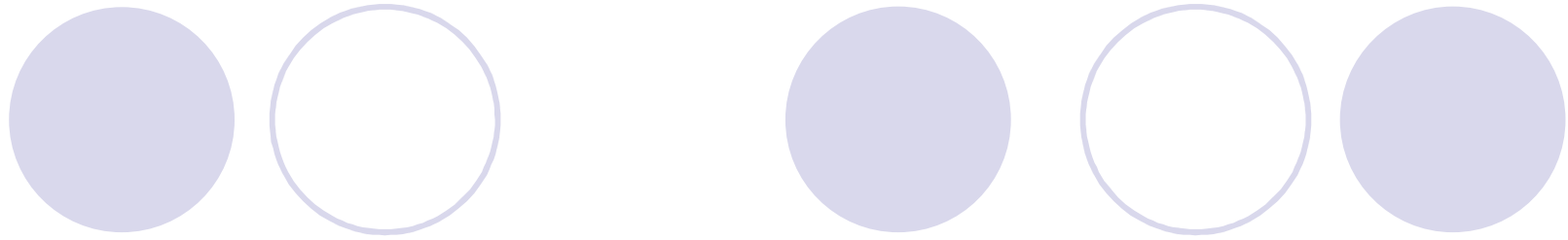
Australian Bureau of Statistics,  
*Personal Safety Survey, 2012*

- One in three women (33 per cent) has experienced physical violence at some stage in her life since the age of 15.
- The majority of cases are perpetrated by men against women and their children.
- Women are mostly assaulted at their home, often repeatedly, by a man they know and with whom they are/were engaged in an intimate relationship



# What is domestic violence?

- Power and Control



- Domestic violence is generally understood as gendered violence.
- In the large majority of cases the offender is male and the victim is female
- Vic Health,(2003) Public Health, Mental Health & Violence against Women

# It Stops Here- the definition of “Domestic and Family Violence” (NSW Reforms)


- Domestic and family violence includes any behaviour, in an intimate or family relationship, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear.
- It is usually manifested as part of a pattern or coercive behaviour.

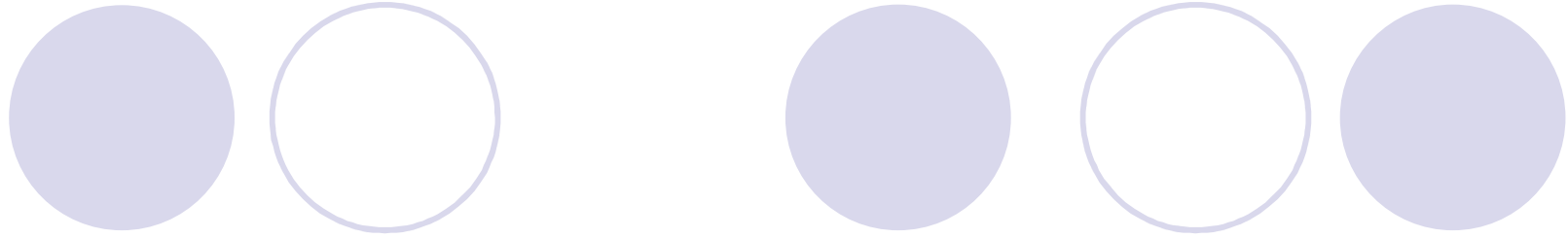


Who does it Affect





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- Domestic and family violence occurs in all parts of society, regardless of geographic location, socio-economic status, cultural and ethnic background or religious belief.
  - Domestic and family violence occurs in same sex relationships, people with disabilities, those who are successful and those who are struggling, young and old



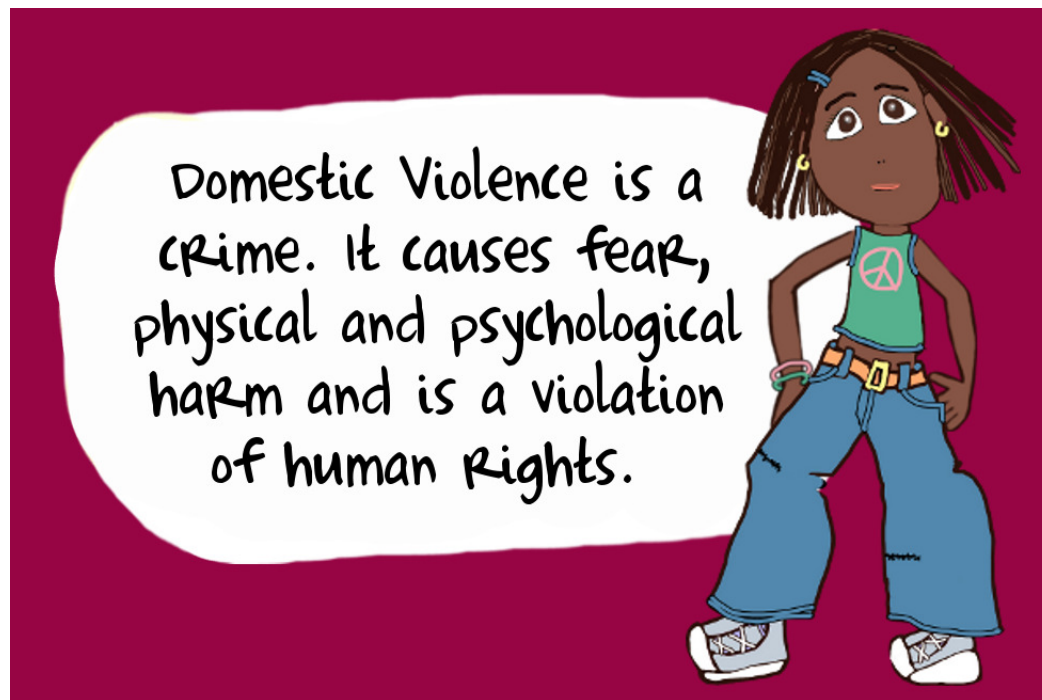
- Being abused is **NOT** a normal part of domestic and/or family life.

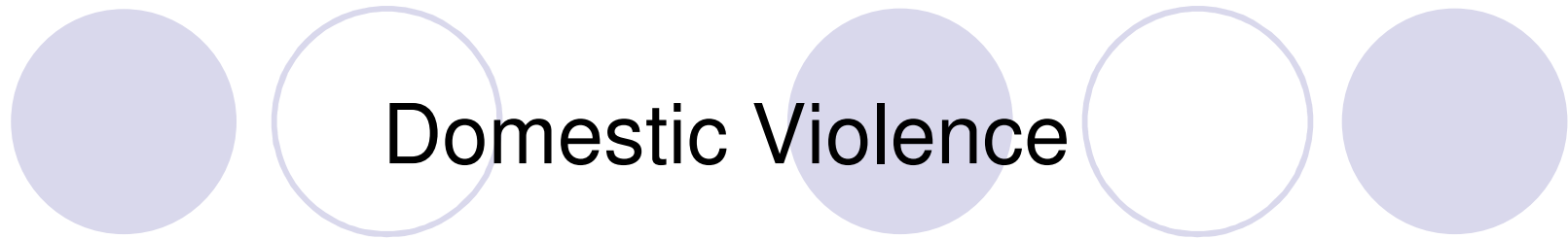


# Domestic violence can include:

- Physical assault
- Sexual assault
- Emotional abuse
- Financial abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Spiritual abuse
- Intimidation
- Stalking
- Social abuse

- Domestic violence is a crime whether it happens in the home or on the street.
- It is not a private matter





## Domestic Violence

### Barriers to detection

- Lack of knowledge
- Lack of confidence in intervention
- Lack of time

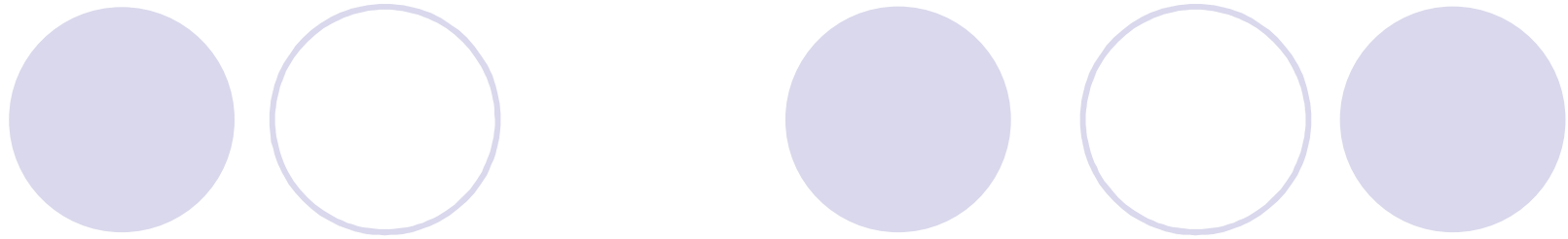


## Presentation of Domestic Violence

The following descriptions are merely hints that a problem may be present.

### Physical Signs

People do not generally present with obvious physical injuries. Violence can include threats, coercion and insults, as well as social and economic control. They may not recognise this as abuse.



Some signs of domestic violence include:

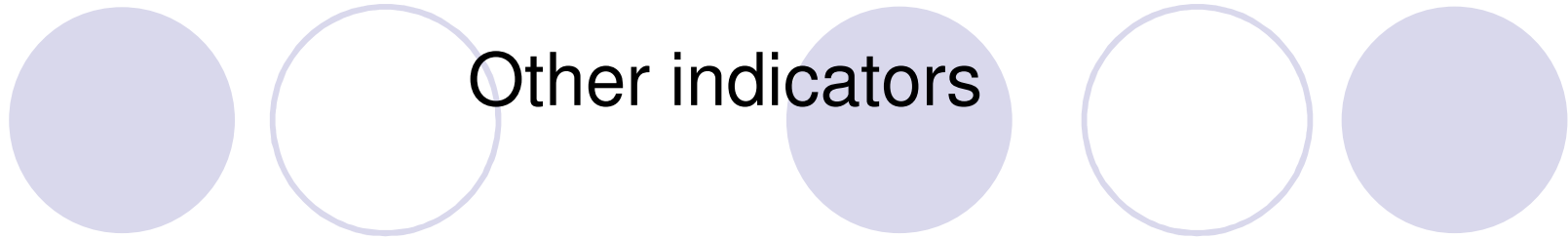
- Multiple injuries
- Minor laceration
- Patterns of repeated injury



More commonly, victims of domestic violence present with a broad range of symptoms such as:

- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Stress related illness
- Drug abuse, including dependency on tranquilisers and alcohol
- Chronic headaches, asthma, vague aches and pains
- Depression





The woman may:

- Appear nervous, ashamed or evasive
- Describe her partner as controlling or prone to anger;
- Seem uncomfortable or anxious in the presence of her partner

## **Asking people about violence**

- The detail of your questions will depend on how well you know the person and what indicators you have observed.

### **Broad questions might include:**

- 'How are things at home?'
- 'How are you and your partner relating?'
- 'Is there anything else happening that might be affecting you ?'

## **Some more direct questions include:**


- 'Are there ever times when you are frightened of your partner /family?'
- 'Are you concerned about your safety ?'
- 'Does the way your partner /family treat you make you feel unhappy or depressed?'

## Responding to disclosures

- **Listen**  
Being listened to can be an empowering experience for people who have been abused.
- **Communicate belief**  
'That must have been very frightening for you.'
- **Validate the decision to disclose**  
'It must have been difficult for you to talk about this.'  
'I am glad you were able to tell me about this today.'
- **Emphasise the unacceptability of violence**  
'You do not deserve to be treated this way.'

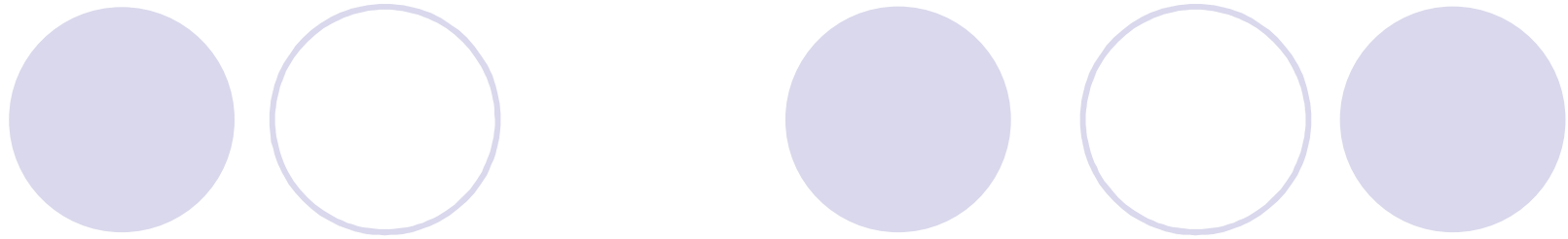


- **Avoid suggesting that the person is responsible for the violence**  
'Why do you stay with a person like that?'
- 'What could you have done to avoid the situation?'  
'Why did he hit you?'



Women are often reluctant to disclose abuse because of fear or shame, or because they think that they won't be believed. Other reasons include:

- Social stigma
- Religious beliefs
- Keeping the family together
- Immigration issues
- Victim blaming
- Threats of increased violence or even murder
- Lack of financial resources



- The victim does not consider it serious enough
- Cultural differences are used to justify, hide or explain abuse
- The victim does not realise that help is available
- The perpetrator may present as a victim or make a counter claim



# WHAT CAN BE DONE

- RECOGNISE ABUSE
- BE AWARE OF WHAT AGENCIES OFFER TO ASSIST AND REFER
- TALK TO PEOPLE AND BE SENSITIVE TO THE SIGNS OF ABUSE
- OFFER NON- JUDGEMENTAL SUPPORT
- ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS





## REMEMBER:

- It is up to everyone to take responsibility for helping to bring about change, and keeping our friends, colleagues and clients safe from domestic violence.
- What we do or don't do will have an enormous impact on someone's future – you may even save a life!



# References

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