

Domestic Violence – The Silent Killer

Domestic violence and abuse are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to gain and maintain total control over a person. An abuser uses fear, guilt, shame, and intimidation to wear the victim down and keep them under their thumb.

Domestic violence and abuse do not discriminate. Abuse happens within heterosexual relationships and in same-sex partnerships. It occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, and economic levels. And while women are more often victimized, men also experience abuse - especially verbal and emotional.

Domestic abuse often escalates from threats and verbal assault to violence. Also while physical injury may pose the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic abuse are also severe.

Violence against women continues to be underreported and stigmatised, meaning that what actually gets reported is only a fraction of the reality.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Violence against women – particularly, what is now known as intimate partner violence, and sexual violence – is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights. Global estimates published by WHO in November 2017, indicate that 1 in 3 (35%) of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

Globally, around 38% of murders of women are committed by a male intimate partner. Men are more likely to perpetrate violence if they have low education, a history of childhood maltreatment, exposure to domestic violence against their mothers, harmful use of alcohol, unequal gender norms including attitudes accepting of violence, and a sense of entitlement over women.

Women are more likely to experience intimate partner violence if they have low education, exposure to mothers being abused by a partner, abuse during childhood, and attitudes accepting violence, male privilege, and women's subordinate status.

In Portugal from Jan to March 2019 some 11 women died as a result of domestic the highest for a decade.

This was more than double the same period in 2018, according to the Observatory of Murdered Women, a Portuguese campaign group, adding that 28 murders were recorded for the whole of 2018.

From 2004 to 2018 some 503 women in Portugal had been killed through domestic violence, the highest in one year being 46 in 2008.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Gender Equality Index 2015 estimated that in Portugal, 24 % of women have experienced violence, which is 9 % lower than in the EU overall.

In Portugal in 2017 there were some 23,753 cases of domestic violence reported to the GNR and PSP of which 20,186 where the victims were women.

The crime of domestic violence was introduced into the Portuguese penal code in 2007. Portugal was the first European Union country to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in February 2013.

The Portuguese Women's Alternative and Response Union (UMAR) says the key to eradicating this crime will lie in changing young people's attitudes to violence. Surprisingly, a study UMAR conducted with 5,000 people aged around 15, found that one in five found physical, psychological or sexual violence in relationships acceptable.

In 2019 the Council of Ministers met with the Attorney General to outline new mechanisms designed to kick-in within 72-hours of any complaint being received by authorities.

Portugal has a national helpline (800 202 148 and 144) for domestic violence, the Serviço de Informação a Vítimas de Violência Doméstica. This service is free of charge, anonymous, confidential and available 24/7. APAV also provides free and confidential services.116 006 (Free call, weekdays from 9 am to 7 pm) - apav.sede@apav.pt

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