

# The Economic Costs of Domestic Violence

**Highlighting the economic costs of domestic violence proves that ending domestic violence is not only a social imperative, but also an economic priority. Estimating the costs of domestic violence demonstrates the cost of government inaction and provides a strong evidence-based argument for prioritising domestic violence.**

Exploring the costs of domestic violence, which are borne by the victim as well as society as a whole, also stresses the very public nature of domestic violence, disproving the myth that it is a private matter.

There are direct as well as indirect costs associated with the consequences of domestic violence and its prevention. Direct costs are largely borne by the State and victims. Indirect costs refer to the less quantifiable pain, fear and suffering of women and children and include the decrease in the quality of their personal, social, and work life. They also have knock-on effects for victims' family, friends and colleagues.

International studies show that it is economically efficient for governments to focus a relatively modest amount of resources on preventative and support services in order to avoid the huge costs of domestic violence.

## Links to International Research

**World Health Organisation**

**United Nations**

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## The economic costs of domestic violence include:

- **Health Costs** are borne by women and the State and include physical injuries, inpatient hospital visits, emergency services, mental health services, medication and premature mortality.
- **Public Service and Administration Costs** are borne by the State and private services and include policing, prisons, legal services, prosecution, counselling, violence prevention programmes, accommodation, direct services to women, child protection services, and income support.
- **Production Related Costs** are borne by women as well as employers and include absenteeism, employer administrative costs, lost productivity, and loss of employment.
- **Consumption Related Costs** are borne by women and the private sector, including the replacement of damaged or lost property, defaulting on bad debts, and frequent relocation.
- **Second Generation Costs** deal with the long-term effects on children living with domestic violence in their health, well-being and the disruption to their education and social development.
- **Opportunity Costs** include a woman's foregone income, tax revenue, and unpaid work in the community; loss of wages by family and friends supporting women; and lower consumption due to lost employment.
- **Pain, Suffering, and Fear** borne by women and their families have far-reaching economic consequences in all areas of their lives and affect all members of a society in which domestic violence is prevalent.

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## Irish Statistics

- The estimated annual economic cost of domestic violence to the Irish economy is €2.2 billion, based on the EU estimated costs for each member state at €555 per citizen annually in policing, health bills, lost productivity and court procedures.
- In Ireland, women experiencing domestic violence have 50% higher emergency visits than other women, double the mental health costs, and six times higher costs for drug and alcohol services (The Women's Health Council).
- In Ireland, 3% of total HSE expenditure is due to physical injuries attributed directly to domestic violence (The Women's Health Council).

## Case Study

Walby (2004) calculated the **annual national costs** of domestic violence for the year 2001 in England and Wales, which amounted to **£23 billion, or £375 per capita**. There was a £2.7 billion loss to the economy due to the disruption of employment, borne by both women and employers. The highest costs were associated with the human and emotional cost of pain and suffering at £17 billion a year. The total cost of domestic violence to services was £3.1 billion, made up of:

- £1 billion to the Criminal Justice System
- £1.2 billion for physical injuries
- £176 million in mental health care
- £0.16 billion in housing expenditures
- £0.25 billion in social services, the majority of which was for children
- £0.3 billion on civil legal services, about half of which is borne by government and half by the individual.