

ECONOMIC
VIOLENCE

**DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE**
YOU CAN END IT!

**FREQUENTLY
ASKED QUESTIONS**

breakthrough
building human rights culture

SEXUAL/PHYSICAL
MENTAL

VERBAL



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About Breakthrough

Breakthrough is an international human rights organization that uses education, media and popular culture to transform public attitudes and promote values of equality, justice and dignity. Breakthrough's human rights programs generate public dialogue, and create positive change about challenging social issues like women's rights, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, religious tolerance, racial justice and immigrant rights.

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Domestic Violence is Unacceptable

Domestic violence fundamentally violates human rights. This booklet is to ensure that people know and understand that domestic violence is not a private matter, and that abusive behaviour is unacceptable. It is a critical problem that affects us all -- in every community, work place and in every section of the society across class, education and economic backgrounds. It is Breakthrough's belief that we can all work together as individuals, institutions, workplaces, neighbourhoods and communities, to make our environment a safer space for women.

Content

Basics on Domestic Violence Resources

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

Use these FAQs to educate yourself and dispel some of the myths about domestic violence. You can also download these FAQs as a PDF by clicking here (PDF attachment) to distribute to members of your organization. Spread the word!

1. **What is domestic violence?**
2. **Why is domestic violence a violation of my human rights?**
3. **Is domestic violence a big problem in our community?**
4. **Who faces domestic violence?**
5. **Who is responsible for domestic violence?**
6. **Why don't victims of domestic violence leave their situations?**
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17. **What are the national statistics about rates of domestic violence in India?**

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1. **What is domestic violence?**

Domestic violence is physical, sexual, psychological or financial violation within the family or in an intimate relationship. It includes:

- Emotional abuse, which includes humiliation, ridicule, verbal abuse, isolation or restriction of movement
- Physical violence
- Sexually degrading conduct
- Economic deprivation
- Harassment due to unlawful dowry demands

2. **Why is domestic violence a violation of my human rights?**

Domestic violence is a fundamental violation of the human rights to life and liberty, and also a violation of one's sexual rights.* Women and men should be able to live lives free of violence, both sexual and physical. These types of actions should never be tolerated, excused or justified.

* Note: Sexual rights are universal human rights based on the inherent freedom, dignity, and equality of all human beings. Sexual rights belong to every person, all around the world: men

and women, rich and poor, urban and rural, young and old, gay and straight alike. They include the right to sexual freedom, autonomy, integrity, privacy, equity, pleasure and expression, to name a few.

3. Is domestic violence a big problem in our community?

Domestic violence is a hidden problem in India, as the home is considered a private space under the control of the male head of the household. Women are seen as traitors by the family when they report violence. This, along with several other factors, result in domestic violence being under reported. According to the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)(<http://www.icrw.org/>) in 1999, four out of ten women in India have experienced violence at home and 45% of women have suffered at least one incident of physical or psychological violence in their lifetime.

4. Who faces domestic violence?

Anyone, regardless of ethnicity, religion, class, age, sexuality or lifestyle can face domestic violence. Domestic violence can occur in any social and economic context, in affluent and poor households, in developed and developing countries, literate and illiterate, educated and uneducated; all types of women are victims. The survivor is related to the abuser through marriage, blood relationship or live-in relationship.

5. Who is responsible for domestic violence?

Abusers come from all walks of life. They can be male or female, but the trend indicates that men are the majority of the perpetrators. The abuser is entirely responsible for his/her behavior, and there is no excuse for domestic violence. There are no justifications for domestic violence, although some studies cite reasons as alcohol, drugs, infidelity, mental illness, working women, and home incidents such as poor food preparation. Whatever the "reason", violence against another person is never justifiable. It is wrong. The only true cause of domestic violence is the abuser's choice to act violently.

The victim/survivor is never responsible for the abuser's behavior. Blaming the partner is something that abusers often do to justify their violent behavior. This is part of the pattern and is in itself abusive. Oftentimes physical abuse is accompanied by mental and emotional abuse, maintaining a dangerous power structure within the home. Women therefore often feel responsible for the violence and it is important to let them know that the violence is not their fault.

6. Why don't victims of domestic violence leave their situations?

The usual response to battering – "Why doesn't she leave?" - ignores economic and social realities facing many women. Shelters are not common or pervasive throughout India, and sometimes family, friends and the workplace do not provide supportive networks that we wish they would or should. Faced with social stigma of failed marriage, societal/traditional norms to keep the family intact and genuine financial barriers to meet daily expenses, the woman may feel that she cannot support herself and her children. Moreover, in some instances, the woman may be increasing the chance of physical harm or even death if she leaves the abusive partner/spouse. Sometimes the woman also loves her husband and feels that he may change for good.

Just as important as a change in legislation is the shift in attitudes about the victims and perpetrators of sexual and domestic violence. There are many misconceptions about sexual and domestic violence, about the victim as well as the abuser. One of the reasons that women are more often victims of violence at the hands of their partners involves the complex social and economic realities that many women face, which in India includes lower literacy and education, financial independence, and the control that men have over women's fate.

7. What is the context of violence against women in India?

Breakthrough conducted an in-depth baseline survey before the launch of the *Bell Bajao!* campaign in India. We found that understanding of domestic violence was limited to dowry-related violence and verbal or physical abuse by family members. The concept of sexual abuse and economic deprivation is low. In terms of attitude, more than 60% of the surveyed population mentioned that a husband can beat his wife in case he suspects her of being unfaithful or does anything without his permission. Overall, we found that the community was still embarrassed to talk openly about domestic violence and seldom intervened in "other affairs". Learn more about statistics regarding incidence of abuse and attitudes toward abuse in FAQ #17 (link to Q#17).

More broadly, in India the literacy rates among women are low, standing at less than 55% when compared to male literacy of almost 76% (National Census 2001). Women also find it more difficult to find employment. Currently, there are 245 million Indian women who cannot read or write, comprising the world's largest number of illiterate women.

When we look at the employment status of women in India, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (<http://www.unfpa.org/public/>) State of World Population 2005 study states that about 70% of graduated Indian women are unemployed. Genuine financial barriers to meet daily expenses, economic dependency on one's partner make women feel that they cannot support themselves and/or their children and in turn prevent them from leaving a violent situation at home. Even employed women face discrimination as only 4% of women have employment in the formal sector or financially sustainable jobs. Women constitute 90% of the total marginal workers in the country. Rural women engaged in agriculture form 78% of all women in other sectors. The traditional gender division of labor ensures that these women get 30% lower wages than men, on average.*

India is also a country where dowry deaths are reported on a regular basis. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), in its annual report, "Crime in India: 2006", also points out that an estimated 7,600 women are killed each year because their in-laws consider their dowries inadequate. A very small percentage of their murderers are brought to justice. **

With these considerations, it is easy to see why it is so difficult to escape a violent situation at home.

*Source: <http://www.sociologyguide.com/women-and-society/women-positions-in-india.php>

** Source: <http://ncrb.nic.in/home.htm>

8. What are the effects of domestic violence on the victims?

The effects of domestic violence or abuse can be very long-lasting, emotional, physically and mentally damaging. People who have been abused by a spouse or intimate partner often suffer from:

- Depression, anger and anxiety attacks
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of trust in others and weak relationships
- Sensitivity to rejection and a feeling of abandonment
- Chronic health problems, substance abuse, sleeping problems and inability to work
- Physical abuse may result in serious injury or death

9. What are the socio-economic costs of violence?*

The socio-economic costs of violence are also high and include the following:

- **Direct costs** are the value of goods and services used in treating or preventing violence such as medical, police, criminal justice system, housing, and social services costs.
- **Non-monetary costs** are the pain and suffering that are a direct result of the violence and include increased morbidity, increased mortality via homicide and suicide, abuse of alcohol and drugs and depressive disorders.
- **Economic multiplier effects** are the macroeconomic, labor market and inter-generational productivity impacts, including decreased labor market participation, reduced productivity on the job, lower earnings, increased absenteeism, inter-generational productivity impacts via grade repetition and lower education attainment of children, decreased investment and savings and capital flight.
- **Social multiplier effects** are the impacts on interpersonal relationship and quality of life including inter-generational transmission of violence, reduced quality of life, erosion of social capital and reduced participation in democratic process.

** Source: Investing in Gender Equality: Global Evidence and the Asia-Pacific Gender Mainstreaming Programme UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo, 2008*

10. How do I know if I'm facing domestic violence?

You are facing domestic violence if the answer to any of the follow is yes:

Does your partner:

- Hit, punch, slap, choke or shove you?
- Destroy personal property?
- Prevent you from seeing friends and family?
- Insult you in public and/or in private?
- Control your finances
- Show extreme jealousy or accuse you of infidelity?
- Force you to have sex against your will?

If you said yes to any of the above questions, please read the next section of questions for victims of domestic violence ([link to victim FAQs](#)). Also, read about your rights under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 ([link to PWDVA FAQs](#)).

11. How do I recognize that someone is being abused?

Some of the signs you may notice of people who are facing abuse:

- **Physical:** Unexplained injuries, bruises, black eyes, sprains, broken bones or teeth. In some cases, the bruises may not be visible, as the abuser intentionally hits the victim on an area that is usually covered by clothes.
- **Emotional:** Anxious, upset, depressed, tearful, angry, worried, restless, quiet or confused.
- **Social:** Avoiding people, not answering the door or phone, canceling events, getting into arguments.
- **Financial:** Overdrawn account, foreclosure, and eviction.
- **Legal:** Frequent court dates, divorce, child custody problems.
- **Work:** Absences, tardiness, sick days, a decrease in work quality, unable to complete tasks, becoming isolated from coworkers.

12. How can I help someone who is facing domestic violence?

Being the friend or family member of a battered person is not easy. Yet staying connected and speaking out against the abuse can play an important role in the victim's eventual decision to make a change in the situation. Let them know

- That you are concerned
- That they are not alone
- That they don't deserve the abuse
- That help is available

To break out of the cycle of abuse, women need support that they can turn to. If a friend or family member does turn to you, the following suggestions may be helpful:

- Let the person talk.
- Work together to develop a safety plan.
- Respect the person's right to make decisions.
- Share information about available resources.
- Stress that the violence is not her fault and that she doesn't deserve to be abused.
- Take action personally against domestic violence when a neighbor, coworker, friend or family member is involved – speak out against the abuse, talk to the person you believe is abusive. If you don't, the abuser might think that the abusive behavior is acceptable.
- Inform the Protection Officer or Service Provider ([link to PO list](#)) on the incident of domestic violence for legal assistance.

13. What can communities do to prevent domestic violence?

- Don't be silent, speak up against the abuse.
- Talk to children and promote gender sensitivity among them.
- Expand education and awareness efforts to increase positive attitudes toward non-violence and encourage individuals to report family violence.
- Develop mutual respect and take a pro-right stance.
- Advocate for the implementation of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (PWDVA) and judicial procedures at the state and local levels that support and protect battered women. [Click here \(link to FAQs about PWDVA\)](#)

for more information about the PWDVA. Also, see FAQ #12 here for more information.

- Mandate a training in domestic violence for all social services and legal professionals.
- Support shelters.
- Recruit and train volunteers to staff helplines, accompany victims to court, and provide administrative support to shelters and victim services.
- Establish medical protocols to help physicians and other healthcare personnel identify and help victims of domestic abuse.
- Provide legal representation for victims of domestic violence.
- Advocate for the accessibility of services for all population groups.

14. What are the legal rights of domestic abuse victims?

In 2005, the government of India passed new legislation on domestic violence called the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (PWDVA). It is a civil law aimed at providing relief to million of women including wives, mothers, daughters and sisters affected by violence in their homes.

Through the PWDVA, affected women are entitled to

- **Protection:** The magistrate can pass orders to stop the offender from
 - Aiding or committing violence within and outside the home
 - Communicating with the woman
 - Taking away her assets
 - Intimidating her family and those assisting her against the violence
- **Residence:** The woman cannot be evicted from the shared household.
- **Monetary relief and maintenance:** She is entitled to maintenance, including loss of earnings, medical expenses, and damage to property.
- **Compensation:** She can claim damages for mental and physical injuries.
- **Custody:** The court can grant her temporary custody of children.
- **Interim order/ex parte order:** The court can pass an interim order to prevent violence before the final order. In the absence of the other party to the dispute, an Ex Parte order can be passed.
- **Legal service:** Women have the right to free legal services under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987

15. What can men do to help stop domestic violence?

Bell Bajar! urges men to become partners in ringing the bell and bringing domestic violence to a halt. Be part of the movement to put a halt to domestic violence by the following these steps:

- **Educate yourself:** Read articles and books about masculinity, gender inequality, and the root causes of violence. Read women's literature, educate yourself and others about the connections between larger social forces and the conflicts of individual men and women.
- **Be a role model:** Set positive examples for other men, especially youth men and boys. Teach boys that strong men respect women and that violence is unacceptable. Act as a mentor to a child who lacks and positive male figure in his life.

- **Challenge other men:** One of the most difficult things for men who oppose violence against women is to learn to challenge other men. Challenge men to drop sexist language from their vocabulary. Challenge men who talk lightly or joke about violence against women. Challenge men who engage in violence.
- **Reflect on your own behavior:** Understand how your own attitudes and action perpetuate sexism and violence and work toward changing them. If you have been violent towards a woman, then urgently seek help and support to change abusive behavior.
- **Support change:** Support candidates for political office who are committed to the full social, economic and political equality of women. Fight for funding for outreach services and women's shelters. Organize and participate in groups working to end domestic violence and sexism.
- **Listen and learn from the women in your life:** Ask a woman who trust you how violence has affected her life. Ask how they want to be supported and what they think men can do to stop domestic violence. Believe women and support them when they confide in you about being abused.
- **Reach out:** Reach out to a family where domestic violence is present. Just offering to listen and acknowledging what is going on helps chip away at the walls that surround and isolate families living with abuse.
- **Don't fund sexism:** Don't purchase any magazine, rent any video or buy any music that portrays women in a sexually degrading or violent manner. Protest sexism in the media.
- **Confront sexist, racist, homophobic and other oppressive remarks to jokes:** Sexist jokes encourage and support a climate where forms of violence and abuse have too long been accepted. When your friend tells a joke about rape, say you don't find it funny. Don't remain silent.
- **Use inclusive, non-sexist language:** Words are very powerful and sexist language sends a message that women are less than fully human. When we see women as inferior, it becomes easier to treat them with less respect and disregard their rights.

16. Why should men care about domestic violence?*

We at Breakthrough think that engaging men and boys are key players in helping to end domestic violence. These are some of the reasons:

- **Because men can stop violence:** For domestic violence to stop, men who are violent must be empowered to make different choices. Every time a man's voice joins those women I speaking out against violence, the world becomes safer for us all.
- **Because men listen to men:** Men are more likely to listen to other men when it comes to the perpetration of domestic violence. Boys and young men look to their fathers and mentors for an example and can be taught that strong men respect women.
- **Because domestic violence is NOT a women's issue:** Family violence affects everyone and stems from sexist attitudes and behaviors. To stop violence, both men and women must work toward changing cultural norms and holding violators accountable.
- **Because violence costs:** Domestic violence has huge socio-economic costs at both the household and community level. See FAQ #9 (Link to Q#9)for more

information. Violence causes loss of income, decreased productivity in the workplace and costs billions of dollars for healthcare, housing and social and legal services.

- **Because men work with survivors:** Men are an integral part of the community that supports and interacts with families dealing with violence. They are the majority of judges, police officers, and doctors who work with families in crisis.
- **Because men know survivors:** They are neighbors, friends, and family members of women suffering from violence. At some point in most men's lives, someone close to them will ask for help. Men must be prepared to respond with care, compassion and understanding.

** Sources: Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (<http://www.mcedv.org/getinvolved/men.htm>), Men Can Stop Rape (<http://mencanstoprape.org>), Harvard Anti-Sexist Man (<http://pagesperso-orange.fr/centralparkattacks/men.html>), EndAbuse (<http://endabuse.org/qabanners/qadaily/index.php3?Question=16>)*

17. What are the national statistics about rates of domestic violence in India?*

Below are some of the staggering statistics about domestic violence incidents in India, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)(2005-06) (www.nfhsindia.org).

- **Abuse:**
 - 37% of women report abuse, with large variations among states
 - 34% had been slapped by their husbands
 - 15% had their hair pulled or arm twisted by their husbands
 - 14% had things thrown at them by husbands
 - One in six wives had experienced emotional abuse by husbands
 - First assault by husbands occurred in less than two years of marriage
 - 62% experienced physical or sexual violence
 - 32% experienced violence in the first five years of marriage
- **Attitudes:**
 - 55% of women think spousal abuse is warranted
 - 41% of women thought slapping was warranted by husbands, if in-laws were disrespected
 - 35% of women thought a beating was warranted by husbands if household chores and childcare were neglected
 - 51% of 75,000 men surveyed think hitting their wives is acceptable, if in-laws were disrespected, with a smaller number thinking that bad cooking/refusing sex were also legitimate reasons
- **Prevalence of physical or sexual violence by state (top 5):**
 - 1) Bihar – 59%
 - 2) Rajasthan – 46%
 - 3) Madhya Pradesh – 46%
 - 4) Tripura – 40%
 - 5) Manipur – 40%
- **Other:**
 - 47% of women with no education suffered spousal violence
 - 16% of women with secondary or higher education reported abuse
 - Only 80% of men and 57% of women have heard of AIDS



- Only 68% of men and 35% of women know that consistent condom use can reduce the chances of getting HIV

* Sources: NFHS India (<http://www.nfhsindia.org/summary.html>), National Crimes Report Bureau (2006), page 17 (http://ncrb.nic.in/cii2006/cii02006.CII_CHARTS06.pdf) and page 5 (<http://ncrb.nic.in/cii2006/cii-2006/CHAP5.pdf>) and South Asia OneWorld (<http://southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/154382/1/?PrintableVersion=enabled>)