



IT'S YOUR BUSINESS!

**A practical guide
against gender-based violence**

by DonneXStrada
in collaboration with Enilive

Every time we decide to extend a hand, we're sowing the seeds to gather the fruit of a social change. It's a joy that can't be measured in numbers or tangible results, but that we see reflected in the eyes of the people we help, and in the rekindling of hope in their lives.

In a world too often dominated by indifference, we choose to be the difference. Building and sharing tools to overcome violence is a mission that we've made our own in the last three years.

We at DonneXStrada know that well. Every time we mobilise to support someone in need, we are building bridges of solidarity and understanding. We're telling the people who reach out to us that they're not alone, that there's always a hand ready to lift them up, a heart ready to listen to them.

It's emotional for me to remember the faces of those who've found a safe harbour in us, a port in a storm. Every story of rebirth, every testimony of change, of someone taking back their life, confirms that we're on the right path. We are the witnesses and architects of a change that starts from the bottom, but has an immense impact.

It's with this spirit that we at DonneXStrada wrote this guide, with the acknowledgement that there's still so much to do.

With gratitude and love,

Ilaria Saliva
President, DonneXStrada

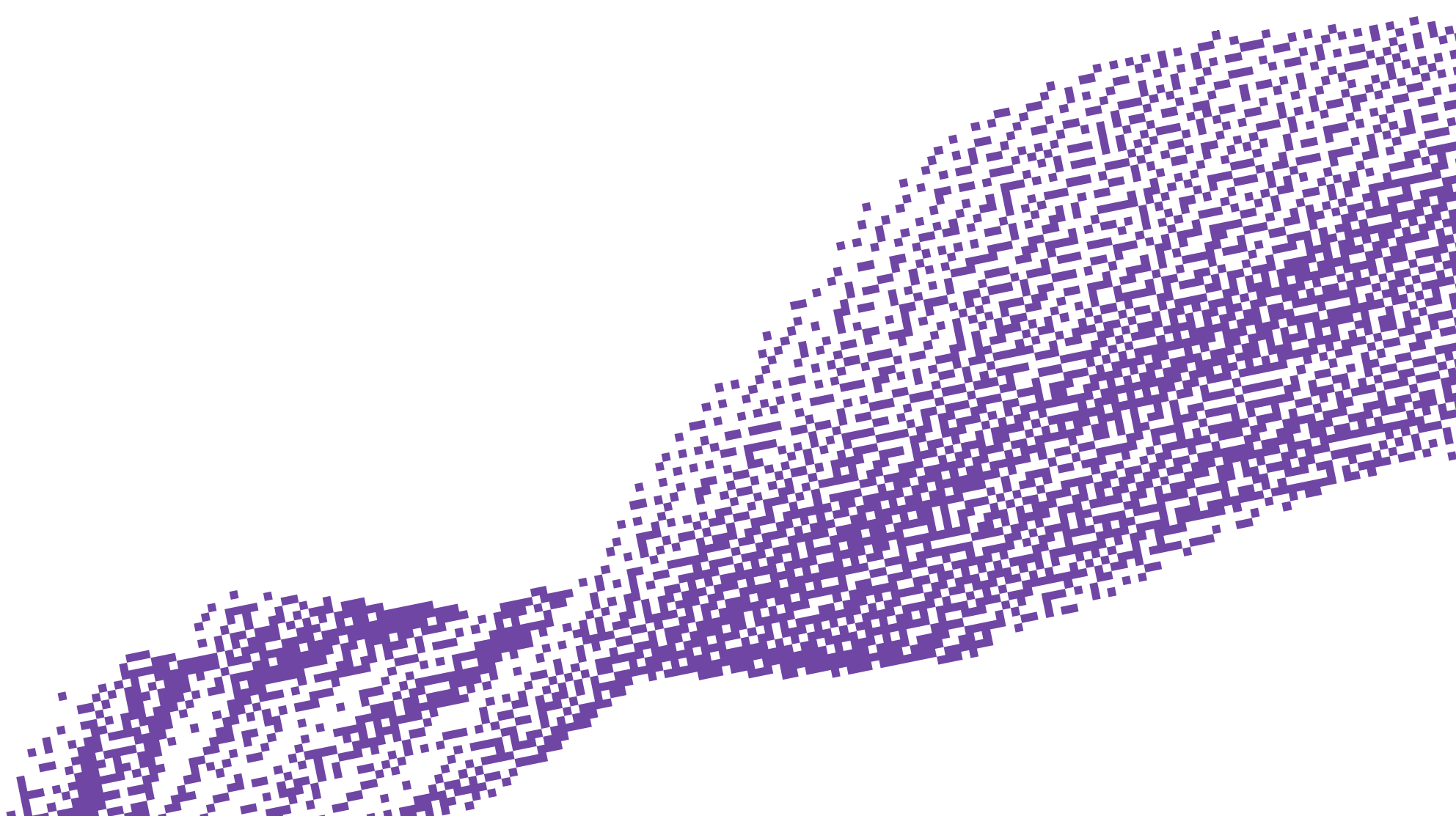


You might wonder: what's a sustainable mobility company got to do with violence against women? According to Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat)'s report on Equal and Sustainable Wellbeing, one woman in two in Italy is scared of going out alone at night, even of walking along the streets of our towns and cities. Enilive is present on these same streets, as well as on less-travelled roads, with over 4 thousand service stations in Italy used by over a million people every day.

The idea of this guide and, more generally, of our collaboration with DonneXStrada is to use this network to help spread practical information, available via smartphone, and it also includes training for Enilive station managers on how to recognise and prevent violence against women. It's a vast awareness-raising campaign that aims to make a contribution against a serious problem: one that's oftentalked about but whose trends demonstrate that there's still so much - too much - to do.

We hope that this guide encourages above all reflection, a prelude to a cultural change that concerns us all. The title of the guide, ***It's your business!***, is intended to reflect the awareness that we are all involved, whether male or female, and to call us to a greater understanding of the issue and the role that we can play to prevent or combat it. So that the streets are made safe for women by the men and women who cross them, and homes are made safe by the neighbours surrounding them, and workplaces are made safe by the colleagues sharing them.

Stefano Ballista
CEO Enilive



WHY IS THIS GUIDE “YOUR BUSINESS”?

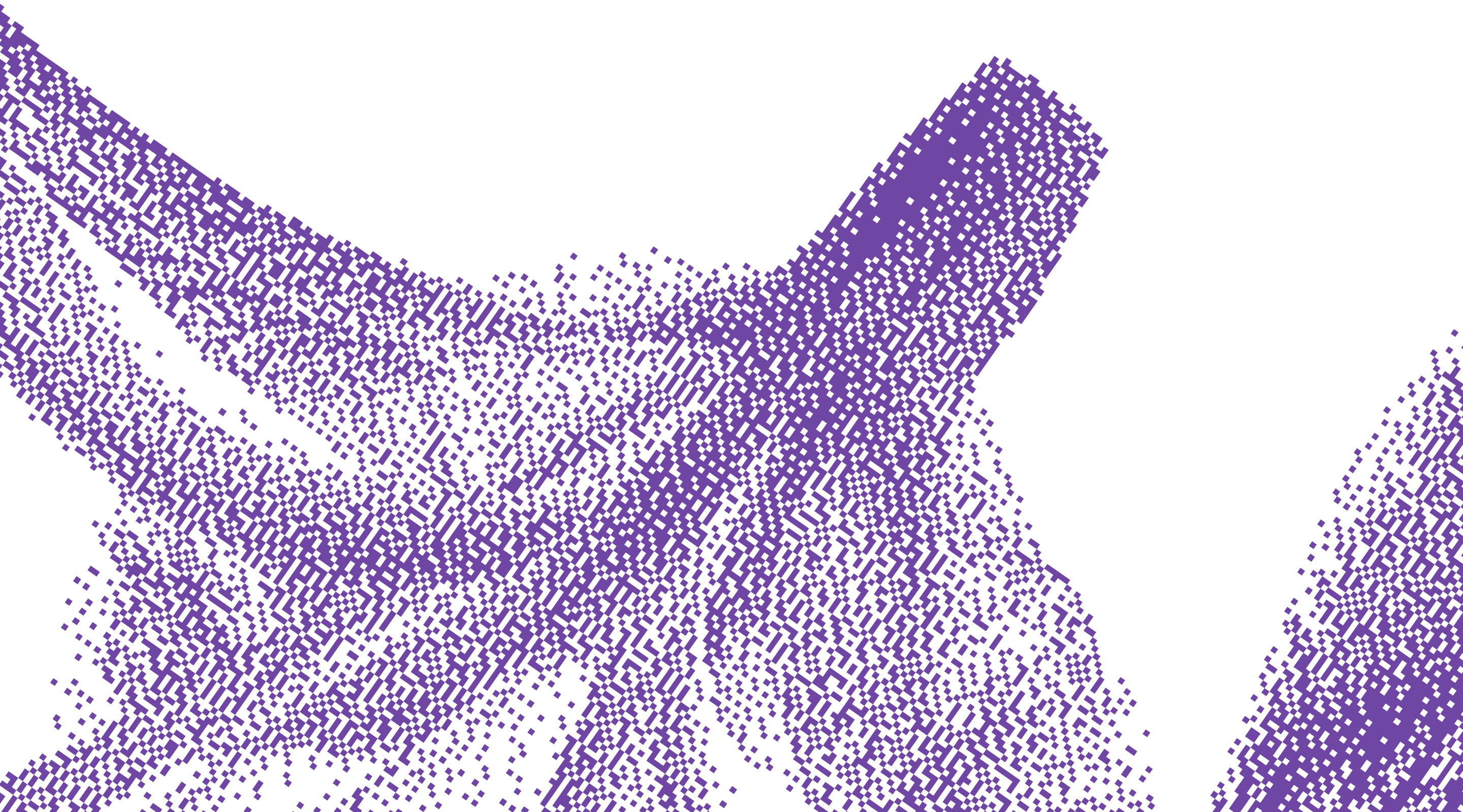
In Europe, more than 30% of citizens don't know what support services are available for women who are victims of violence.

At the same time, one in three women in Europe is (or has been) a victim of gender-based violence.

These facts alone show that there is a significant need to improve public understanding of the different types of gender-based violence and the resources available to support those affected.

We hope that ***It's your business!*** will help achieve this.

We want our words to be received, reused, and shouted from the rooftops, against the structural and cultural evil that we call gender-based violence.



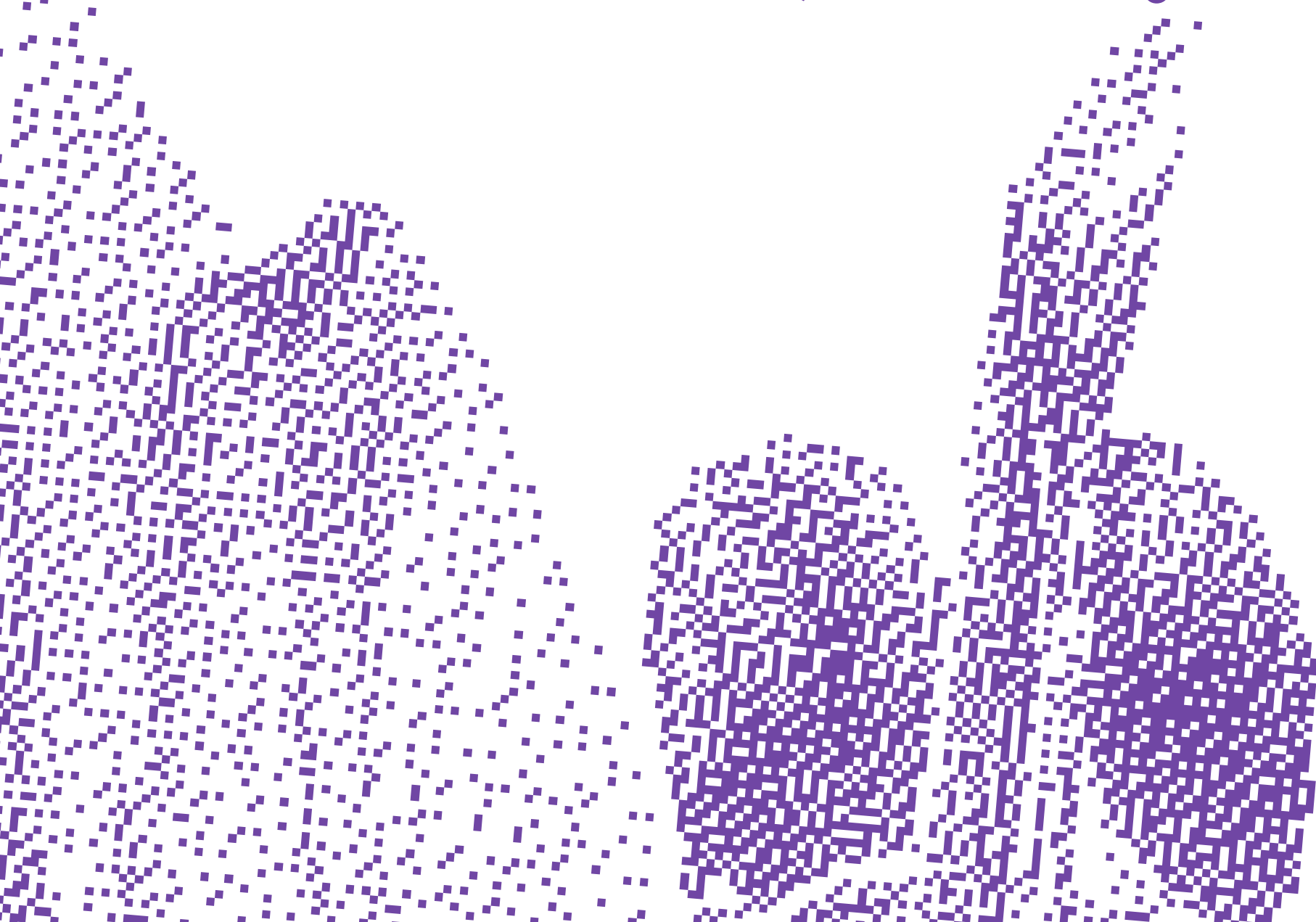
WHAT INFORMATION CAN I FIND IN THIS GUIDE?

This guide is split into two parts:

1. In the first part we talk about violence within an intimate relationship and, specifically, domestic violence (the so-called Intimate Partner Violence);
2. In the second part we discuss violence outside an intimate relationship, meaning violence committed by strangers or acquaintances of the victim, in a non-domestic context (the so-called Non-intimate Partner Violence).

Inside you'll find a wealth of information from different, complementary viewpoints: in fact, this is a multidisciplinary guide that analyses the possible situations from an informative, psychological and legal perspective, with useful gynaecological and nutritional information as well as numerous practical tips on how to handle violent situations.

The intention is to prevent, inform and empathise, but also to be scientific, with certified data and definitions. For this reason, we decided to include only those forms of violence indicated in the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (the so-called 2011 Istanbul Convention), even though other forms also exist.

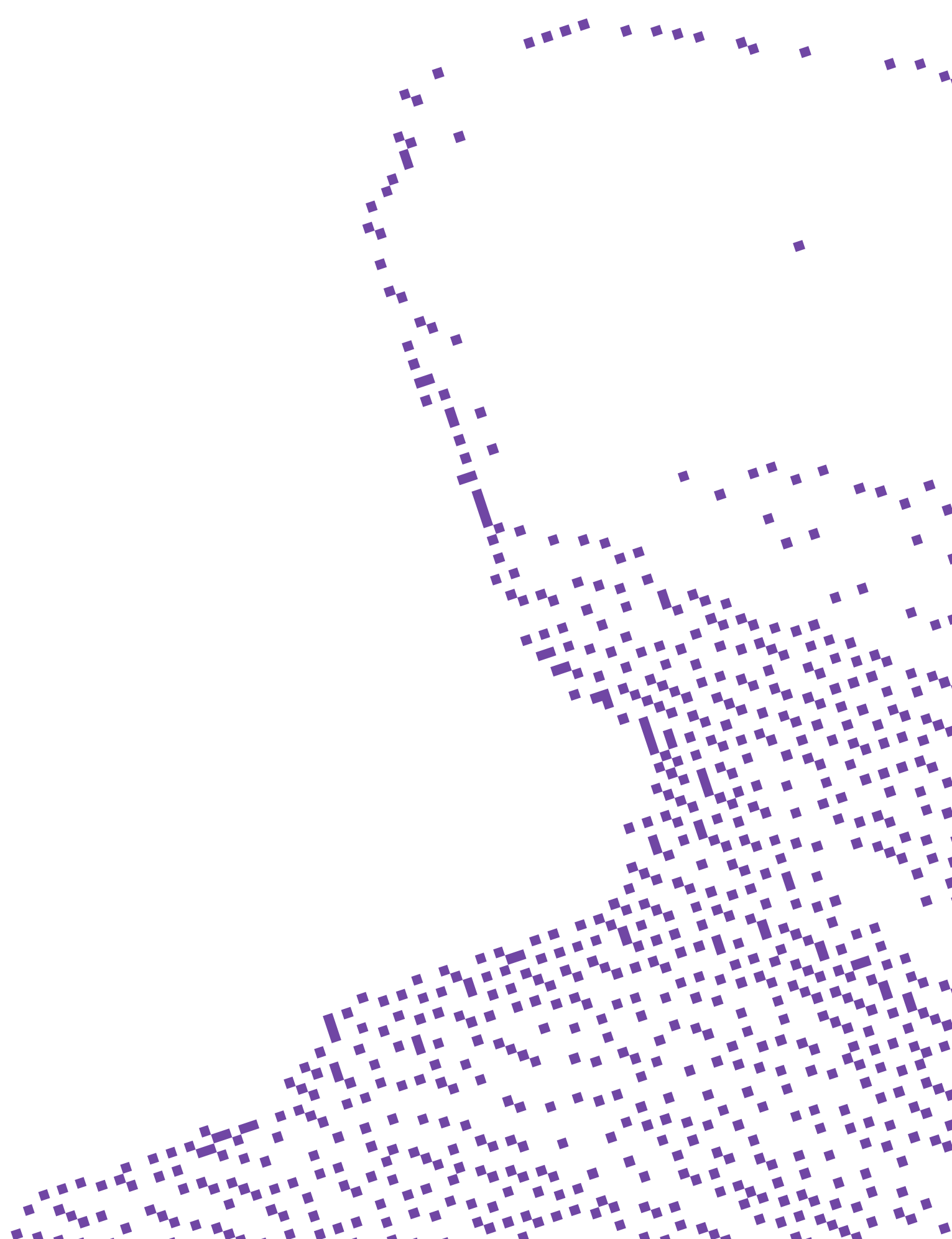


editorial note

We have decided to use language aimed at women and to address an audience of women and people identifying as female, because *It's your business!* has the aim of focussing on the violence of men against women.

For this reason, we are reaching out directly and personally to a female reader, whether adolescent, adult, or elderly: we've imagined a huge female audience to talk to, using plain, easily understood language, so that everyone can be "guided": both victims and their friends or relatives.

Having said that, we don't want to discount all the other forms of violence perpetrated in our society, such as homophobic and transphobic violence or gender-based violence that affects particular groups of the population (such as the LGBTQIA+ community) and all the implications linked to the intersectionality of the victims, given that every incident of violence and every person who suffers it comprises a unique case, never completely the same.



contents

part 1: DOMESTIC ABUSE (IN AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP)

DOMESTIC ABUSE IN NUMBERS

red flags for domestic abuse

FORMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Physical violence

Psychological violence

Financial violence

Digital violence (or digital control)

Relational stalking

Unlawful sharing of intimate images

***why is it a mistake to call this
offence revenge porn?***

Sexual violence in an intimate relationship

***gynaecological consequences of
sexual abuse in an intimate
relationship***

witnessed violence

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Anxiety disorders

Sleep disorders

Obsessive-compulsive disorder

Psychosomatic disorders

Eating disorders

mindful and intuitive eating

Dissociative disorders

Depressive disorders

emotional dependence and toxic relationships empowerment and self-esteem

managing rage and emotions assertive communication

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Criminal defence

Police commissioner's admonition

Civil protection

Protection orders against family violence

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR COPING WITH DOMESTIC ABUSE

information on emergency gynaecological services

part 2:

VIOLENCE OUTSIDE AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP (COMMITTED BY A STRANGER OR ACQUAINTANCE)

HARASSMENT

Types of harassment

Psychological aspects of harassment Legal implications of harassment

Practical tips for coping with harassment

SEXUAL VIOLENCE (OUTSIDE AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP)

Psychological aspects of sexual violence
Legal implications of sexual violence
Practical tips for coping with sexual violence

gang rape alcohol and date-rape drugs

gynaecological consequences of sexual assault outside an intimate relationship

UNLAWFUL SHARING OF INTIMATE IMAGES

Psychological aspects of the unlawful sharing of intimate images
Legal implications of the unlawful sharing of intimate images
Practical tips for coping with the unlawful sharing of intimate images

STALKING

Psychological aspects of stalking
Legal implications of stalking
Practical tips for coping with stalking

cyberstalking

APPENDICES

MINI-GLOSSARY (FOUR SUPER-IMPORTANT CONCEPTS)

NOTES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABOUT US





part 1

DOMESTIC ABUSE

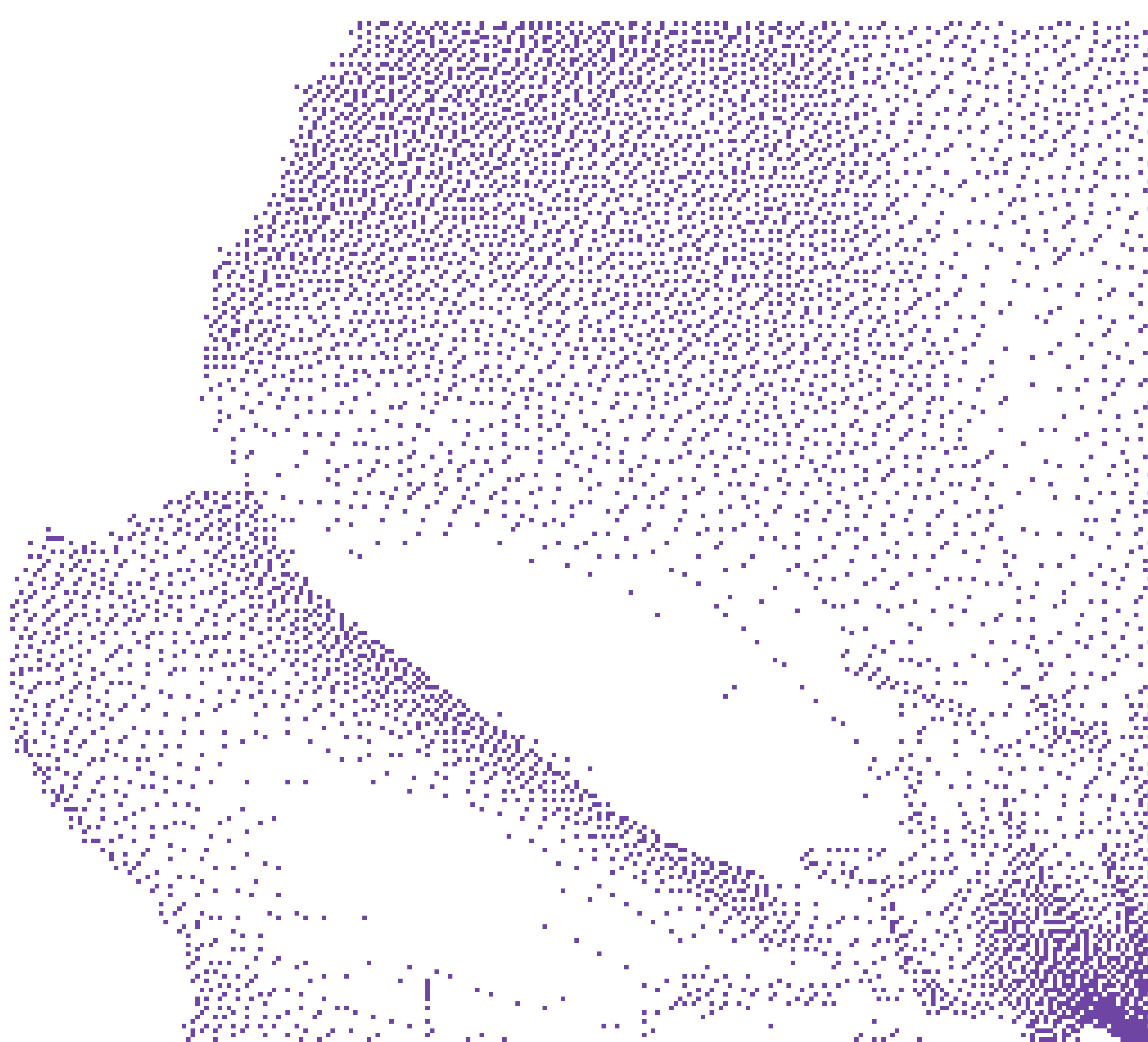
***(within an intimate
relationship)***





part 1

In layperson's language, domestic abuse is understood as all forms of abuse within an intimate relationship, whether the couple live together or not.¹



domestic abuse in numbers

12,424

Cases of maltreatment of family members and live-in partners in the first six months of 2024 in Italy (+5% compared with the same period in 2023).²

81%

The incidence of victims who are female.³

49%

The percentage of Italian women (aged 18 to 65) who, in 2023, said they'd suffered this type of violence at least once in their life.⁴

26,131

The number of women who began a violence exit programme in 2022 with the help of one of the 385 Anti-Violence Centres and 457 women's shelters in Italy.⁵

42%

The percentage of female victims of domestic violence worldwide who have suffered permanent injuries and wounds.⁶

red flags for domestic abuse

Apart from the most obvious cases of physical abuse and maltreatment, there are some red flags that can help you recognise, as soon as possible, the dynamics (above all psychological) of the violent behaviour of your partner:

- control of your mobile phone and movements;
- comments on your makeup or clothes, or telling you how to dress;
- making you feel guilty if you go out with your friends or meet your family;
- you feel increasingly isolated and as if you're giving up lots of things that you used to do before you met him;
- you feel unhappy, resigned, almost empty in terms of your energy and desires;
- he puts you down and makes you feel unequal to any occasion
- you feel as if you no longer know what's real, you always doubt yourself and your capabilities (gaslighting);
- he's not happy about your successes;
- he often loses his temper, raises his voice and shuts down conversation;
- after he's lost his temper and attacked you verbally, he comes back to say sorry with overblown actions, expensive gifts and promises of everlasting love (love bombing);

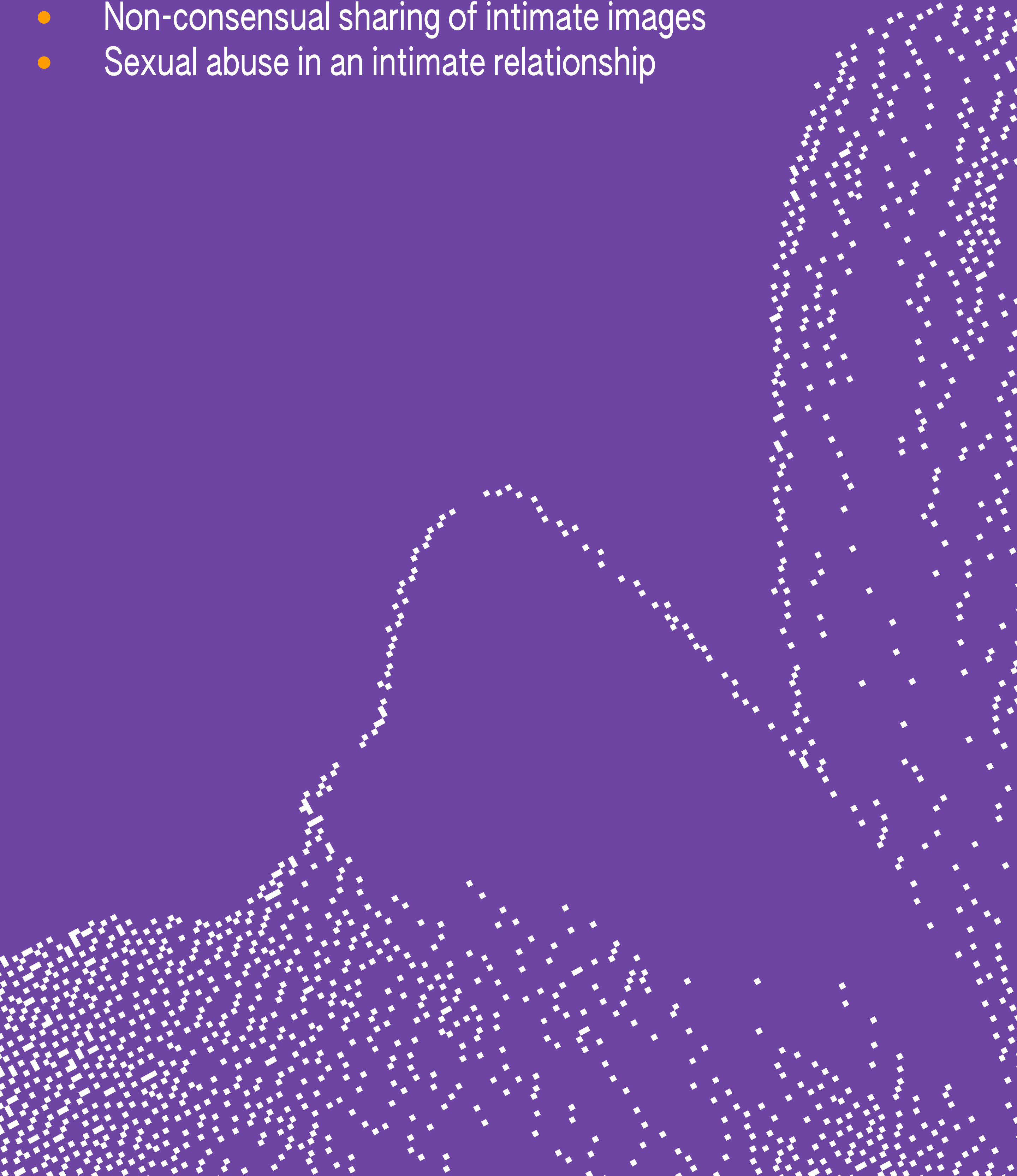
- you always feel under emotional blackmail: he often says things like “if you love me, you should...”; “if you really loved me you wouldn’t dress like that to make everyone look at you...”
- he’s very jealous, and says that his jealousy is due to your behaviour or is because he loves you so much;
- you feel as if you’re worth nothing without him, that only your relationship gives your life any meaning and that you can put up with anything for love (affective dependence).

If you recognise yourself in even a few of these examples, you might be in a dysfunctional relationship, which could degenerate into domestic violence.

part 1

***FORMS
OF DOMESTIC
ABUSE***

Domestic abuse can take many forms and can be categorised as:

- Physical abuse
 - Psychological abuse
 - Financial abuse
 - Digital abuse (or digital control)
 - Relational stalking
 - Non-consensual sharing of intimate images
 - Sexual abuse in an intimate relationship
- 

physical abuse

Physical abuse comprises any physical interaction based on force. It may involve various behaviours:

- punching, kicking, pushing, yanking, biting, strangling, burning;
- use of objects such as belts, knives, wooden spoons, blades and guns, etc.

physical abuse in numbers

35%

The percentage of women worldwide who have been victims of physical (and/or sexual) abuse.⁷

1 in 3

Women aged 15 and over who've suffered physical (or sexual) abuse.⁸

**245
million**

The number of women and girls aged 15 or over worldwide who suffer physical (and/or sexual) abuse from their partner every year.⁹

20.2%
**(4 million
and 353
thousand)**

The percentage of Italian women aged 16 to 76 who have suffered physical violence at some point in their life. Women are pushed or yanked (11.5%), hit, kicked, punched and bitten (7.3) hit with objects that

can hurt them (6.1%).¹⁰

13.6%
**(2 million
and 800
thousand)**

The percentage of women who have suffered physical (or sexual) abuse from their partner or ex-partner. Specifically, 5.2% from their current partner and 18.9% from their ex-partner. 68.6% of women who had a violent partner in a previous relationship left him because of his abuse.¹¹

14,448

The number of women who ended up in an emergency room following an assault in 2022: an increase of 13% over 2021.¹²



psychological abuse

Psychological abuse is the set of actions, words, threats and intimidation used to force someone to act against their will. While physical force is not necessarily used¹³, it may include forms of isolation and distortion of what is real.

It's more devious than other forms of abuse and doesn't have any obvious physical signs, so it's more difficult to recognise even for anyone suffering it.

some examples of psychological abuse

- Being subjected to forms of ambiguous communication (such as sarcasm)
- Receiving criticisms and humiliation to bring you down and embarrass you, possibly in public
- Feeling constrained to give up your passions to satisfy or appease him
- Seeing your choices constantly ridiculed
- Feeling constantly controlled and reproached
- Feeling guilty for certain behaviours

A particularly ambiguous form of psychological abuse is gaslighting, a term that includes any actions designed to make someone doubt their own beliefs, perceptions and memories. To achieve his objective, the gaslighter systematically manipulates reality in order to confuse his victim.

psychological abuse in numbers

10.1%

The percentage of women in Italy (more than 2 and a half million) who suffer psychological abuse. Although it's high, this number doesn't include unreported (so-called "hidden") cases. ¹⁴

25.1%

The percentage of women in Italy who are subjected to acts of control, denigration and humiliation by their partner. ¹⁵

36.9%

The percentage of calls to 1522 (freephone anti-violence and stalking number, active 24/7 throughout Italy) concerning episodes of psychological abuse. Psychological abuse is the second most common reason for calling. ¹⁶

financial abuse

Financial abuse is one of the invisible forms of male violence against women. It includes every type of deprivation, exploitation and control aimed at generating a condition of financial dependence against the victim's will.

It's a form of abuse carried out by the partner in a position of economic superiority by denying (or threatening to deny) the financial resources his partner needs - or preventing her from participating in management of the family's household finances - with the direct consequence of taking away her financial autonomy.

some examples of financial abuse

- Arbitrary limitations on your own wishes and aspirations in choosing between work and family
- Exclusion from management of family finances
- Control of expenses, medical treatments, work
- Deprivation of tools such as debit and credit cards

financial abuse in numbers

49%

The percentage of women saying they have been subjected to financial abuse at least once in their life (up to 67% in women who are separated/divorced).¹⁷

1 in 10

Italian women who say that their partner has prevented them from working.¹⁸

74%

The percentage of women in Italy seeking help from an anti-violence centre and reporting financial abuse (mainly unemployed women, housewives and undocumented workers).¹⁹

41%

The percentage of women who have experienced at some time in their life a form of financial abuse within their intimate relationship - which is twice as likely if they earn much less than their partner.²⁰

27%

The percentage of women with a lower income than their husband or live-in partner who have been subjected to financial abuse by their partner at least once – compared with 14% of women with a similar income to their partner.²¹

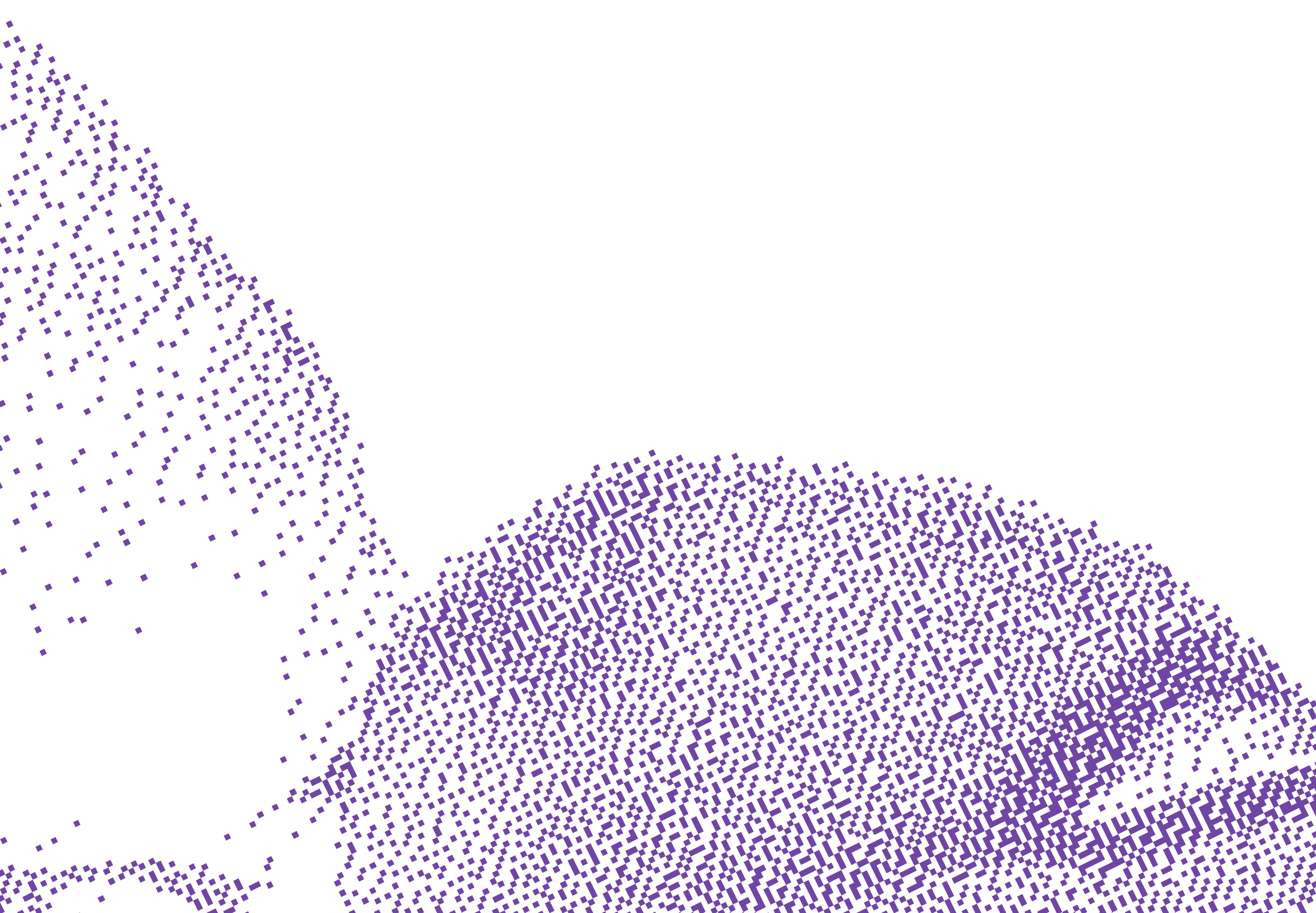


digital abuse (or digital control)

Digital abuse, or digital control, is when a person in an intimate relationship uses electronic devices, messaging apps and GPS to control, spy on, intimidate and harass their partner.

Technological progress has led to an exponential rise in cases of men who digitally control their partner, with the sole aim of monitoring and spying on her.

Apps originally designed for safety and peace of mind - such as checking that your kids made it to school safely - often become dangerous tools in the hands of potential aggressors. The term “stalkerware” describes software used to monitor someone’s digital activities without their consent.



digital abuse in numbers

71%

The percentage in Europe of domestic abusers who control their partner's computer. 54% use software to track their victim's smartphone.²²

31,031

The number of people worldwide who were the victims of stalkerware in 2022; in Europe, the countries most affected are Italy and Germany.²³

26%

The percentage of people in Italy who think it's normal to spy on their partner without consent – 8% say they've done it.²⁴

24%

The percentage of Italians who think that their digital privacy has been invaded.²⁵

relational stalking

Relational stalking is a particular form of stalking carried out by someone's partner (or an ex, or an obsessive admirer).

When the stalker is her husband, even if separated or divorced, or someone who has (or had) an intimate relationship with the victim, the offence is more serious.

Pay great attention to this kind of behaviour, because apparently mild harassment can become ever more dangerous, potentially developing into physical violence, bodily harm and, in extreme cases, murder (or attempted murder).

some examples of relational stalking

- Persistently turning up at the victim's workplace
- Constantly going to the places she hangs out
- Repeated phone calls to an ex-wife, faking interest in how the kids are
- Constantly sending flowers or love letters
- Secretly and repeatedly following the victim

relational stalking in numbers

+59%

The percentage increase in calls to 1522 compared with 2022 (51,713 calls).²⁶

+48%

The percentage increase in acts of harassment between 2013 and 2022.²⁷

unlawful sharing of intimate images

The sharing of intimate or sexually explicit images is unlawful if the people represented in the images have not authorised it; in this case, intimate material which should have remained private is shared by a partner or ex.

It may also be shared by the people who originally received it: this case will be discussed later, in [Part 2](#).

unlawful sharing of intimate images in numbers

1,279

Number of offences involving the unlawful sharing of intimate images committed in 2023.²⁸

+61%

The percentage of women who have had intimate images shared unlawfully from the total of all victims (men and women).²⁹

why is it a mistake to call this offence revenge porn?

This crime is often known as “revenge porn,” a term suggesting the concept of retaliation.

The use of this expression is both mistaken and dangerous, because it risks suggesting that the victim is implicitly responsible, conveying the message that the content was shared to settle a score.

So there is a real danger that a very serious offence against the dignity of the person may be considered in some way as justified.

sexual abuse in an intimate relationship

Even within an intimate relationship - whether marriage or partners who live together - sexual relations are only lawful when both the people involved have consented.

Under Italian law there are two types of sexual abuse (article 609 bis of the criminal code):

- the first **sexual abuse by force** and refers to the behaviour of any person who, by violence or threat or by means of abuse of authority, forces anybody to commit or to endure sexual acts;
- the second is **sexual abuse by coercion** and refers to the behaviour of any person who induces someone to commit or to endure sexual acts by abusing their condition of physical or mental inferiority.

sexual abuse in an intimate relationship in numbers

62.7%

The percentage of rapes committed by a partner or ex-partner.³⁰

31%

The percentage of women aged 15 to 49 who have experienced, at least once in their life, physical or sexual violence

1 in 4

from a partner, ex partner, friend, acquaintance or family member. In absolute terms, this amounts to about 736 million women and girls worldwide.

The percentage increase in acts of harassment between 2013 and 2022. Young women aged 15 to 19, who are married or have a stable relationship, who have been victims of violence and abuse from their partner at least once in their life³².

gynaecological consequences of sexual abuse in an intimate relationship

Sexual abuse has a profound impact on gynaecological health. However, it's not easy to describe the consequences of the abuse in terms of the genital apparatus alone, as this type of trauma should be considered in the context of the victim's wellbeing as a whole.

Some reactions and dysfunctions can also affect the nervous, immune and endocrine systems as well as mental equilibrium. Different types of abuse and risk factors can have different consequences, depending on their nature.

Some examples of the effects of sexual abuse on gynaecological health are:

- **chronic pelvic pain**
Chronic pain, which differs from acute pain in its persistence and complexity, may derive from various factors, including injury, inflammation and psychological trauma. Pain is processed through the emotive context and psychological factors that influence the formation of memories. This process involves various areas of the brain, which can also lead to the inhibition or amplification of the perceived painful stimulus.

Some stimuli that are normally perceived as neutral (a touch or nudge, or someone brushing against you) may, following a trauma or other incident, be perceived as painful. Traumatic experiences such as violence and abuse can trigger biological reactions that contribute to the development and maintenance of chronic pain disorders. The pain may persist as a consequence of chronically disorganised processes that respond inappropriately to changes in the nervous, endocrine and immune systems. Past trauma could, following a stimulus, reactivate the autonomic nervous system, thereby triggering the immune system and inflammatory response. Chronic pain in victims of violence should not, therefore, be attributed to just one psychological, sociological or biological cause, but to a combination of all three. See the [section on pain and sexual dysfunction as a traumatic response to violence in Part 2 for more information.](#)

- **sexually transmitted diseases**
Sexual violence exposes the victim to a greater risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially if the perpetrator is a stranger or casual acquaintance. However, even women who are abused by their partner are at a greater risk of STIs and infertility: victims may in fact be coerced into sexually risky behaviours, such as unprotected sex, or their partner may also have other sexual partners, further increasing the risk of STIs.
- **chlamydia and gonorrhoea**
Chlamydia and gonorrhoea infections may be symptomatic (pelvic pain is common) or non-symptomatic, and can trigger an occult inflammatory process called Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). This can result in infections and purulent fluids and

detritus collecting in the fallopian tubes, causing dilation and scarring, which can also cause infertility.

- **HIV**

Although numbers have been dropping in recent years, HIV infection is still widespread in Italy.

According to the latest data from the Italian National Institute of Health, in 2022 there were 1,888 new infections³³, three-quarters of which were in men; one-third of all cases were in foreigners, who are disadvantaged by their marginalisation from the social network and inequality in access to healthcare. People with female genitals are less likely to transmit the infection but have a greater risk of contracting it, due to their functional and anatomical characteristics (while the virus is found in cervical secretions, it spends less time in contact with the skin of the penis, whereas sperm, which also contain the virus, spend more time within the vaginal canal, increasing the risk of infection.

- **lacerations**

Surprisingly, it is difficult to establish the frequency of genital lacerations in cases of sexual abuse. Not all cases of sexual assault involve vaginal or anal penetration or contact with the genitals. As well as lacerations, other injuries may include abrasions, bruising, reddening and swelling. Another problem may be the time lapsed between when the aggression occurred and when it was reported: in some cases it might be months or even years later, making it impossible to document any injuries. Healed lacerations can have long term consequences, such as chronic pelvic pain, vaginismus and changes in the anatomy or function of the genital apparatus.

witnessed violence

Witnessed violence is a form of indirect abuse in which children are witnesses to the maltreatment of their own mother. This is a particular type of domestic abuse that is not experienced in person, but indirectly.

Under Italian law it is an aggravating factor in relation to the crime of maltreatment in the family, covered by article 572 of the criminal code, and occurs when the aggression is committed in the presence of or against a minor. Children who witness maltreatment should always be considered as victims rather than passive witnesses, because they need care and attention thanks to the harmful effects of their exposure to abuse. Witnessed violence is a form of abuse whatever the age of the minor, if the number, quality and recurrence of the witnessed episodes lead to an impact on his or her normal psychophysical development. The offence of maltreatment in the family is aggravated even if just one of the violent episodes is carried out in the presence of a minor. ³⁴

witnessed violence in numbers

32.4%

The percentage of babies and children supported by social services who are victims of witnessed violence. In April

2021, there were 401,766 such minors in all, of whom 77,493 were the victims of maltreatment.³⁵

58.9%

The percentage of women who have begun an exit abuse programme who have children living with them.³⁶

73.1%

The percentage of cases in which children witnessed episodes of violence against their mother; in 21.9% of cases the children themselves suffered abuse.³⁷

2,663

The number of children living in a women's shelter, with an average number of 142 nights per child.³⁸

3,500

The number of calls to 1522 in 2023 from women reporting that their children had witnessed the offense; of these, almost 1,500 had suffered abuse directly.³⁹

32.4%

The percentage of victims of witnessed violence supported by social services who are minors.⁴⁰

5,000

The number of minors who have directly or indirectly been involved in maltreatment.⁴¹

legal implications of witnessed violence

Witnessed violence is an aggravating circumstance in the offence of maltreatment, so all the points discussed under domestic abuse are applicable. Following a conviction, the sentence may be increased by the judge. As the injured party, you can be the claimant in the criminal process (through your non-offending parent or, if they both maltreated you, through your court-appointed guardian).

practical help to cope with witnessed violence

If you have witnessed violence, remember that you can ask your teachers, social workers, doctor, school psychologist, and associations like DonneXStrada or CAV for help. They can report the offence on your behalf. All the advice given in the section on Practical help to manage domestic abuse is also applicable.

part 1

***PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASPECTS OF
DOMESTIC
ABUSE***

part 1

In situations of domestic abuse, the idea of home - a safe and secure place - often becomes superimposed in the victim's mind with the concepts of danger, fear, anger or shame.

Living with a violent partner means never having a moment's rest and having to stay constantly alert: you could therefore perceive some psychophysiological changes, such as harm to your brain's "alarm" system, an increase in stress hormone activity and the development of negative thoughts.

It often happens that you feel forced to remain in the dangerous and painful environment because it corresponds to your own home: this element of constraint amplifies a tendency of adaptation to the abuse, leading you to develop defence mechanisms aimed at survival.

However, such responses change in relation to your age, resources and critical aspects present in the current relational situation or resulting from your own childhood relational experiences, the intensity of the perceived danger and intrusiveness of the event, and its repetition over time. What's more, the consequences of these experiences can range from a complete effective recovery to stronger reactions that prevent you from continuing to live your everyday life as normal.

Below you will find descriptions of some psychological conditions that may be associated with such experiences of abuse; these may manifest as full-blown psychological disorders or with partial signs and symptoms.

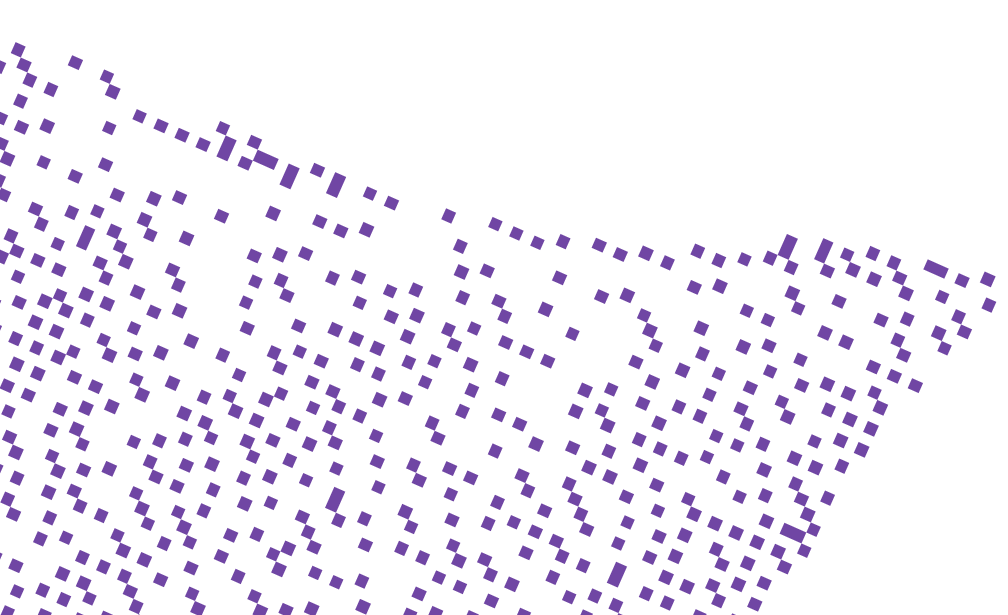


post- traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Trauma can be classified in two broad categories:

- **Trauma with a capital T** includes all events that lead to death, are life-threatening or that threaten our or our loved ones' physical wellbeing (physical or sexual violence and abuse, whether experienced directly or witnessed, can be included in this category);
- **trauma with a small t** describes subjectively disturbing experiences characterised by a feeling of being overwhelmed by the event, which is experienced as intrusive, but which does not generate a fear for your physical safety (events such as being disparaged, belittled, or verbally attacked by your partner can be included in this category).

Both kinds of trauma can lead people to experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), causing them to repeatedly relive the traumatising experience in the form of flashbacks, memories, nightmares, or physical sensations, emotions or intrusive thoughts. Another very common symptom is feeling guilty, while from a physical point of view, breathing difficulties, headache, gastrointestinal disorders and a weakened immune systems may all be experienced.



disturbi d'ansia

In this context, anxiety disorders should be understood as a consequence of the constant expectation of danger, given that the climate of domestic abuse is typically characterised by rapid, and sometimes sudden, transitions from calm to violence. This state implies the strong activation of the sympathetic nervous system, so-called “hyperarousal.”

In such a case even small environmental changes, such as sudden sounds or particular smells, or even changes in the attitude, glances or movements of the people around you, can cause alarm signals strong enough to trigger a reaction.

the most well-known anxiety disorders

Panic attacks: these are characterised by an intense peak of anxiety, often accompanied by a racing heart, gasping and a state of confusion. The anxiety can be so strong that you might think you're going mad or are about to die.

Generalised anxiety disorder: this is a state of constant worry and agitation about everyday life situations.

Agoraphobia: people who develop agoraphobia are often scared of being in big, crowded spaces, because they're always worried that they might need help from one moment to the next.

They're often scared of going out or using public transport on their own, which triggers a need to always look for someone to go with them, to calm their anxiety about the danger.

Specific phobias: a specific phobia presents as a marked fear or anxiety in relation to a specific object or situation. It occurs not only when the phobic stimulus is present, but also when there is an expectation of encountering or interacting with it. Examples of specific phobias include animals, heights, water, blood, closed spaces, etc. Such phobias are often triggered by clearly related traumatic events, such as a fear of water following an experience of almost drowning in a bathtub. In other cases the association is less obvious. An object or situation may act as a generator of a traumatic memory even if it is not apparently connected, such as a fear of dogs arising after suffering a physical assault in which a dog could be heard barking in the background.

Social anxiety: this is characterised by a strong, persistent anxiety arising during social situations due to a strong fear of being judged by others. Sufferers may brave such situations with extreme discomfort, or avoid them altogether.

sleep disorders

Sleep disorders generate a strong and persistent dissatisfaction in relation to both the duration and quality of sleep.

The most common sleep disorders following a violent experience are insomnia and recurrent nightmares. Insomnia may manifest as a difficulty in falling or staying asleep or as early waking in the morning.

obsessive- compulsive disorder

This disorder involves an extreme attempt to control outside events.

It often arises following experiences involving a feeling of powerlessness, such as in a context of domestic abuse, and is characterised by obsessive thoughts, compulsions, or both of these. Obsessions are recurrent, involuntary and intrusive ideas. Compulsions are a type of ritual involving particular mental actions or acts that the sufferer feels compelled to carry out repeatedly, in an attempt to reduce or prevent the anxiety caused by the obsessions. By performing these rituals, the sufferer feels that they can prevent something negative from happening.

psychosomatic disorders

We now know that there is an intimate connection between mind and body, and psychosomatic disorders are one of the proofs

of this reciprocal influence. A psychosomatic disorder is a physical response to a psychological distress. When we feel an intense emotion such as anger, sadness or fear but we don't express it, it doesn't disappear: on the contrary, it is subsumed into the body, searching for a way to come out.

The most common problems associated with psychosomatic disorder are muscle disorders, gastrointestinal disorders, cardiocirculatory disorders, urogenital disorders, skin disorders, and pseudo-neurological disorders (conversion symptoms such as paralysis, difficulty swallowing, aphonia and amnesia). These physical signs, even if not produced intentionally, are connected with your mind and represent real distress.

eating disorders

Eating disorders usually involve an obsessive focus on weight and body shape, as well as an abnormal consumption or ingestion of food. They present with dysfunctional eating behaviours, such as binge eating or compensation mechanisms, or more simply through forms of restricted eating. Both psychological and physical aspects are thus

Eating disorders often arise as an attempt at distraction from traumatic memories and management of negative emotions. In the literature, we can see that a high proportion of women with eating disorders have experienced violence, especially psychological and sexual abuse.



different types of eating disorder

Anorexia nervosa: characterised by an intense fear of getting fat, restriction of your calorie intake and a significantly low body weight, as well as a distorted mental image of your own body.

Bulimia nervosa: characterised by binge eating and a feeling of losing control, alternating with compensatory behaviours such as vomiting or excessive use of laxatives.

Binge eating disorder: characterised by binge eating at least once a week for three months, without any inappropriate compensatory behaviours such as in the case of bulimia nervosa. Another difference from bulimia nervosa is that sufferers have less of an interest in their weight or body shape.

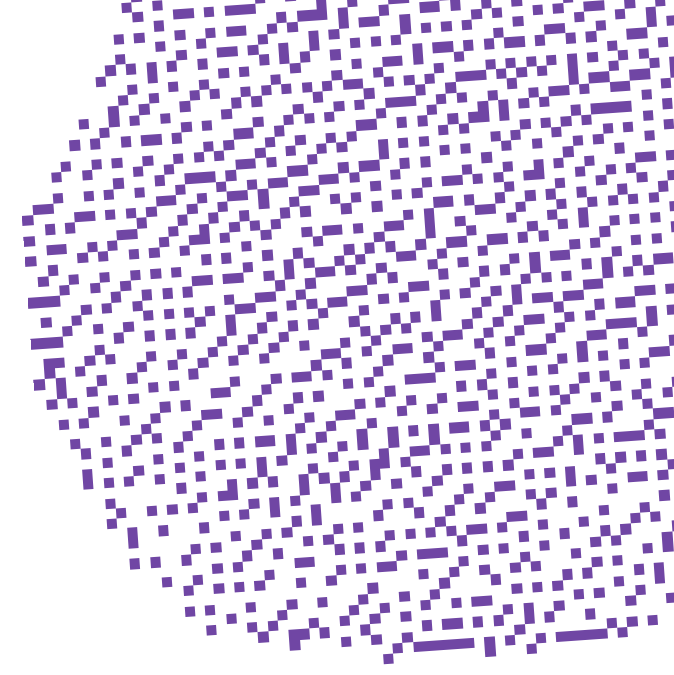
mindful and intuitive eating

Mindful eating and intuitive eating are two approaches designed for people who have a problematic relationship with food, especially those suffering from binge eating disorder (BED).

Through these techniques, people learn to listen to their own needs and to recognise that in addition to real hunger, they may also be driven to eat by emotive states (sadness, anger, etc.) and mental states (such as judgement and beliefs). Mindful and intuitive eating teach us to get back in touch with our inner sensations of hunger and satiety and to better manage the emotive and mental urges associated with food. This interrupts the vicious circle that begins with a difficulty in managing complex emotions, continues with hyperphagia, often accompanied by guilt and frustration, and culminates in the use of food to avoid having to deal with these emotions.

It's very important to help women who have been victims of violence to understand the importance of improving their psychophysical health and guide them towards ways they can achieve this. Experimental data has shown that around half of women with eating disorders are survivors of sexual abuse, which in 80% of cases took place in their childhood. In this age group sexual abuse, together with an absence of interpersonal support and a self-perception as isolated and vulnerable, seems to be directly associated with the presence of symptoms of an eating disorder.

dissociative disorders



Disassociation is an extreme defence mechanism that the psyche might resort to when faced with a strong emotive stressor. For some people, the idea of having lived through the traumatic experiences is intolerable - it's simply too painful; processing and integrating those episodes into their consciousness thus becomes impossible. The only way they can ensure their emotive and psychological survival is by attempting to control the traumatic memories by pushing them away, as if they were locked in a closet.

Unlike the anxiety disorders described earlier, in which the body responds to the perceived danger with a strong alarm and general activation (hyperarousal), in dissociative disorders (and depression) the opposite defensive reaction is triggered, with an emotional detachment/flattening and a slowdown of thoughts (hypo- arousal).

Experiencing episodes of domestic abuse could lead, as an extreme consequence, to the creation of an out-and-out psychological barrier. Victims may even start rejecting the parts of themselves that have been mistreated or traumatised, in an attempt to cancel not only the abuse they have suffered, but all the physical and emotional sensations associated with it.

For example, women may often feel “powerless,” “empty,” “incompetent,” or “unlovable,” “dirty,” or “not good enough”: they may even start to feel they “deserve the abuse.”

This detachment process, which responds to their need to live their everyday life without addressing the trauma, can provoke a non-recognition of the abuse itself or of their own vulnerable parts, translating to a profound alienation from their own self.

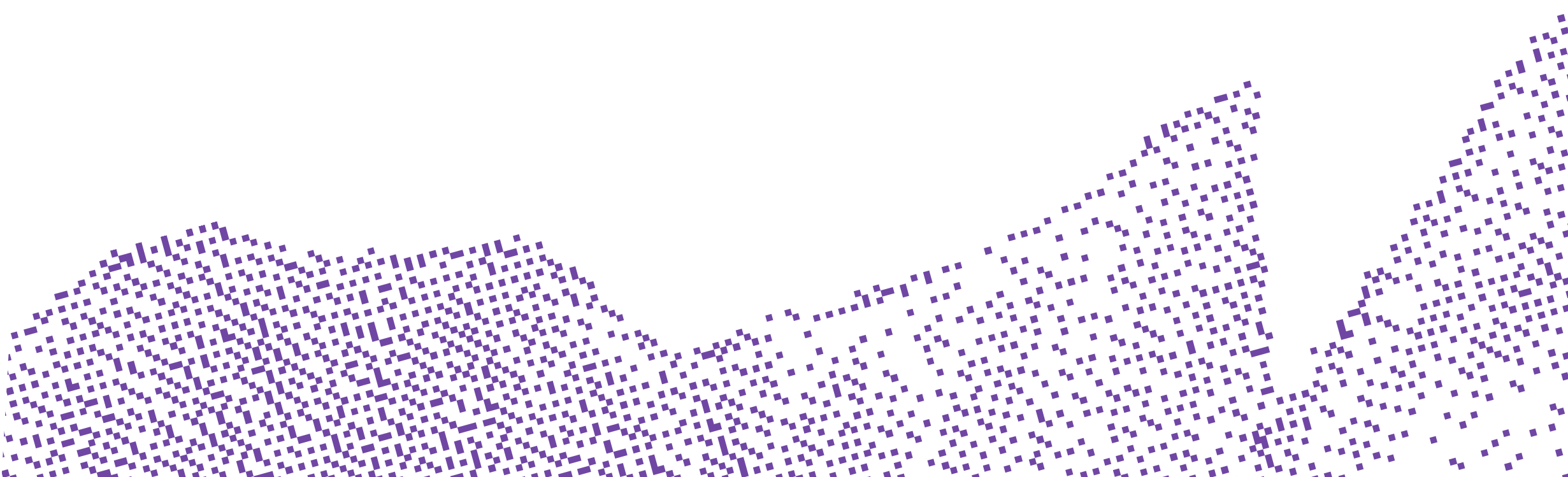
However, this emotional detachment cannot wipe out the traumatic memories, which are at danger of being overwhelmingly reactivated following any situation or stimulus (“trigger”) with which they are unconsciously associated, provoking sudden and apparently arbitrary bodily sensations, emotions and negative thoughts.

depressive disorder

People living in a state of depression often experience intense feelings of dissatisfaction, pain and emptiness, and it becomes ever more difficult to find pleasure in everyday activities.

This is not a state of temporary sadness, but rather a condition that tends to take up most of the space in their mind and life. People with depressive disorder live with negative and pessimistic thoughts about themselves and their future, often accompanied by a chronic psychophysical fatigue.

As with dissociative disorders, there is a tendency for sufferers to construct defence mechanisms involving submissiveness, linked to their identification with the role of victim and past experiences of powerlessness, affective flattening, slowed thought, hopelessness and a negative and fragile sense of self.



emotional dependence and toxic relationships

Emotional dependence can be defined as a dysfunctional pathological state in which the intimate relationship is experienced as the only, essential and necessary condition for the sufferer's own existence. They attribute to the other person an importance so great as to nullify their own self and ignore their own needs. Dysfunctional (also called "toxic") relationships almost always involve an emotional dependence, because in this type of relationship one or both partners enact abusive, controlling, violent or manipulative behaviours.

Emotional dependence is often a key precursor to violence within the relationship.⁴² In fact, physically violent partners often seem to have extremely high levels of emotional dependence, compared with non-violent partners in both happy and unhappy relationships. Physically violent partners also have a lower self-esteem and a greater fear of abandonment and tend to focus solely on the intimate relationship, excluding many other social contacts. The relationship is a source of pain for the victim, but she is unable to break it off because distance and/or separation cause severe stress and anxiety, while her partner is incapable of accepting the idea that the relationship might end.

th parties, albeit for different reasons, try their utmost to avoid breaking up, even if staying together only causes pain, unhappiness and resignation. The victim, for fear of being lonely or of having to take on the responsibility of changing - and even though she may feel desperate and angry - continues to search for ways to keep the relationship going, for example by forcing herself to tolerate unacceptable behaviour or to submit to her partner's decisions, even if he has already been violent on multiple occasions.

These personal difficulties are also often sustained by a number of contextual and sociocultural elements that further impede the abuse victim from getting out.

For example, even the people closest to the victim might repeat platitudes about how it's acceptable - or even preferable - to submit to being controlled and abused, and suffer in silence. Such comments only help feed her sense of guilt about the idea of leaving an abusive relationship.

If you recognise yourself in this description and believe that it's impossible to end a dysfunctional relationship, please understand that it's not your fault if you are unable to leave. In addition to the subjective difficulties related to the decision to leave someone, remember that in some cases there are still systemic and structural dynamics that won't help you - on the contrary, they sustain the trope that women must be martyrs and that "real men" must command respect, at any cost and by any means.

empowerment and self-esteem

Empowerment: means “taking power” and is a social process that can help you become stronger, more capable, more self-confident and focussed on what you want. Through this process, you can gain greater power and control over your life, thus helping you to believe in your own capabilities and resources and to change anything you don’t like about your situation.⁴³

Self-esteem: is how you value and perceive yourself⁴⁴, but it also derives from how other people see you and what they think of you during your life.⁴⁵ Its development is in fact also influenced by “ideals” about what the outside world and society expects you to be (such as a “good mum,” a “good wife,” a “girlfriend who knows her place”).

What happens in violent situations: when we are exposed to domestic abuse, the psychological manipulation we’re subjected to teaches us to be scared of the person we love and to try to avoid provoking his violent reactions; we think that we’re the problem and that we’re not good enough, or that we’re mentally unstable.

There are five main tactics that abusive men use to control relationships and manipulate the behaviour of women:

- isolation;
- unpredictable attacks;
- false accusations;
- humiliation;
- threats and occasional rewards.

Abusers deprive their partner of contact with her friends and families, thus becoming the sole point of reference for her self-esteem. Manipulation may cause her to lose her self-esteem altogether, leading her to believe that she deserves the abuse she's being subjected to. In order to protect themselves and their children women live in fear, accept abuse and lose hope that they will ever be able to change their situation. But that's not true!

How to boost empowerment and self-esteem: to escape from these situations, you can ask professionals for help, but you should also take the time to create good social networks and friendships that make you feel supported and not alone. You might also have to free yourself from your partner's financial control. In this case specialist associations, family counselling clinics, anti-violence centres and job centres can help you find training and professional opportunities to achieve financial independence, enabling you to choose freely where to live and with whom, how to raise your children (if you have any), or even to go on holiday with your friends

managing anger and emotions

Rage is a natural emotion that we feel when we're cornered, when our territory is threatened and we have to fight to defend it, or when something that's ours (time, relationships, a promise made) is taken away. There are countless reasons why we might feel anger, and they all depend both on our current situation and the context we grew up in, the things we've experienced during our life. And yet anger is often considered unhealthy and judged negatively, because culturally it is often confused with violence - which, however, is another thing altogether.

Violence is a behaviour: an action chosen and enacted that leads to consequences. In contrast, rage is an emotion: we feel it, we experience it, and we can decide whether or not to act on it. Violence can undoubtedly be triggered by rage, but it can also explode for other reasons, such as a desire for power, a desire to dominate and subdue, a need to always be in the right.

Violence is often a learned behaviour, and flourishes in a patriarchal climate involving an imbalance of power and the repression of emotions. It arises from a culture in which, from childhood, we are never permitted to express our rage in a healthy way. The same thing also sadness, which have

always been considered as “negative,” preventing their normal and healthy expression.

Denying ever feeling pain, sadness or fear is what leads men to stop feeling empathy, because these are believed to be emasculating emotions that detract from the concept of “alpha male” that still holds sway in our society: a toxic idea of masculinity tied to a patriarchal view of men who, to be considered such, must have control over their partner as if she were an object.



assertive communication

In personal, family and professional relationships, communication is not just a way of expressing ourselves or asking for something, but is often used to manipulate, offend or maintain a relationship of power. Learning to communicate effectively and assertively is essential if we want to live in harmony with our own needs and let others know what they are, without being trampled on.

Assertive communication enables us to express our point of view clearly and honestly while being respectful of other people's ideas.

Here are some tips on how to communicate assertively:

- I can express what I feel: I am my own judge and I take responsibility for what I say;
- I can ask for my ideas and opinions to be listened to, but other people don't necessarily have to agree with me;
- I can ask other people to satisfy my needs, but I can't demand it;
- I don't always have to justify my behaviour;
- I can say "no" without feeling guilty;

- I know that I don't know everything, so I can make mistakes in good faith or say "I don't understand";
- I am free to change my mind;
- I can have different needs and desires than other people;
- I can make illogical decisions;
- I can be myself, even if sometimes I'm different from how others think of me.

To communicate effectively, it's useful to use sentences that begin with "I," describe how you feel about the behaviour of the other person and calmly support your own point of view. Avoiding judgement helps to create a respectful and constructive dialogue that is considerate of both your own and other people's needs.

part 1

***LEGAL
IMPLICATIONS
OF DOMESTIC
ABUSE***

criminal defence

Maltreatment is an automatically prosecutable offence, so you, or anyone who comes to hear about any violent episodes, can report it. To be represented and assisted in the legal process, you can also access free legal aid (“*gratuito patrocinio*”), paid for by the State, regardless of your income.

Before or after filing a complaint, you can ask for assistance and accommodation in a women’s shelter or anti-violence centre, if you need it: going back to the family home and the presence of your aggressor could be dangerous.

You can also ask for your aggressor to be removed from your home or have a restraining order placed against him, possibly with an electronic tag; if he returns home or otherwise violates the conditions of the restraining order, he is committing an offence.

If you are a victim of domestic abuse, in the criminal proceedings you can constitute the claimant, to obtain compensation of damages.

In any case, your statements will be very important in the proceedings, as there is unlikely to be any other evidence: you will have to be clear in what you say, without contradicting yourself. But don’t worry: you only need to tell the truth. In addition, if you sought help from an Anti-Violence Centre (*Centro Anti-Violenza CAV*), the people who wrote any reports on your case may be called as witnesses.

When you are subjected to physical violence:

- go to a *pronto soccorso* (emergency room) and keep any medical certificates reporting your injuries, as you will have to present them to the judge;
- if anyone (friends, acquaintances and relatives) witnessed the abuse, give their name to your lawyer, so that they can be called as witnesses during the proceedings;

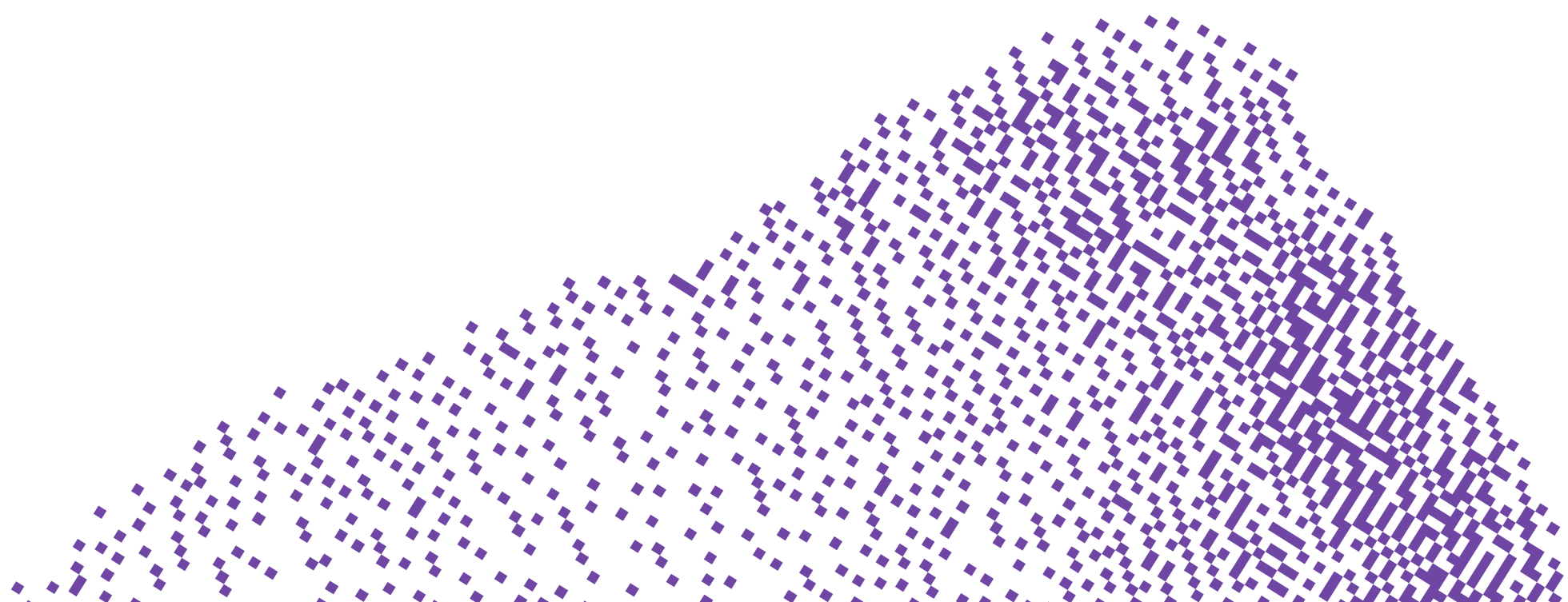
- if you made any video or audio recordings during episodes of abuse, give them to your lawyer, along with any offensive messages.

In relation to digital abuse (or digital control):

- use complex PINs and passwords for your electronic devices that cannot be guessed by other people (avoid using the names of your children or dates of birth, etc.);
- do not always use the same passwords, and don't save them;
- don't share your passwords;
- turn off geolocation when it isn't necessary;
- be careful about publishing information online that might reveal your movements;
- turn off any smart devices (such as Alexa) in your home;
- use the incognito mode when you browse the internet.

If you think that a tracking app has been installed on your phone, don't cancel the app because it could be essential evidence. In this case, use a different device to report it and/or ask for help and/or contact the Postal Police, which you can also do anonymously without having to file a complaint.

You alone can file a complaint in relation to the offence of abusive access to an electronic device; however, if violence against objects or persons was involved, or if the offence caused the damage or destruction of the electronic device and/or the data and apps it contained, it can be prosecuted automatically (anyone aware of the offence may report it).



police commissioner's admonition

As an alternative to filing a complaint, you may ask for a police commissioner's reprimand, which enables a more rapid protection to be put in place. You will have to submit a report describing what happened and provide evidence to demonstrate the abusive conduct (such as offensive messages or emails received, photos, videos, medical certificates).

The police commissioner will inform the person concerned, who may see the accusations and present a defence. When the police commissioner issues the reprimand, this orders the aggressor to stop his violent conduct.

Once you have requested a reprimand, we advise you to stay away from your home and to ask for help and accommodation at a women's shelter or anti-violence centre, because, as already said, it could be dangerous for you to return to the family home where your aggressor is living.

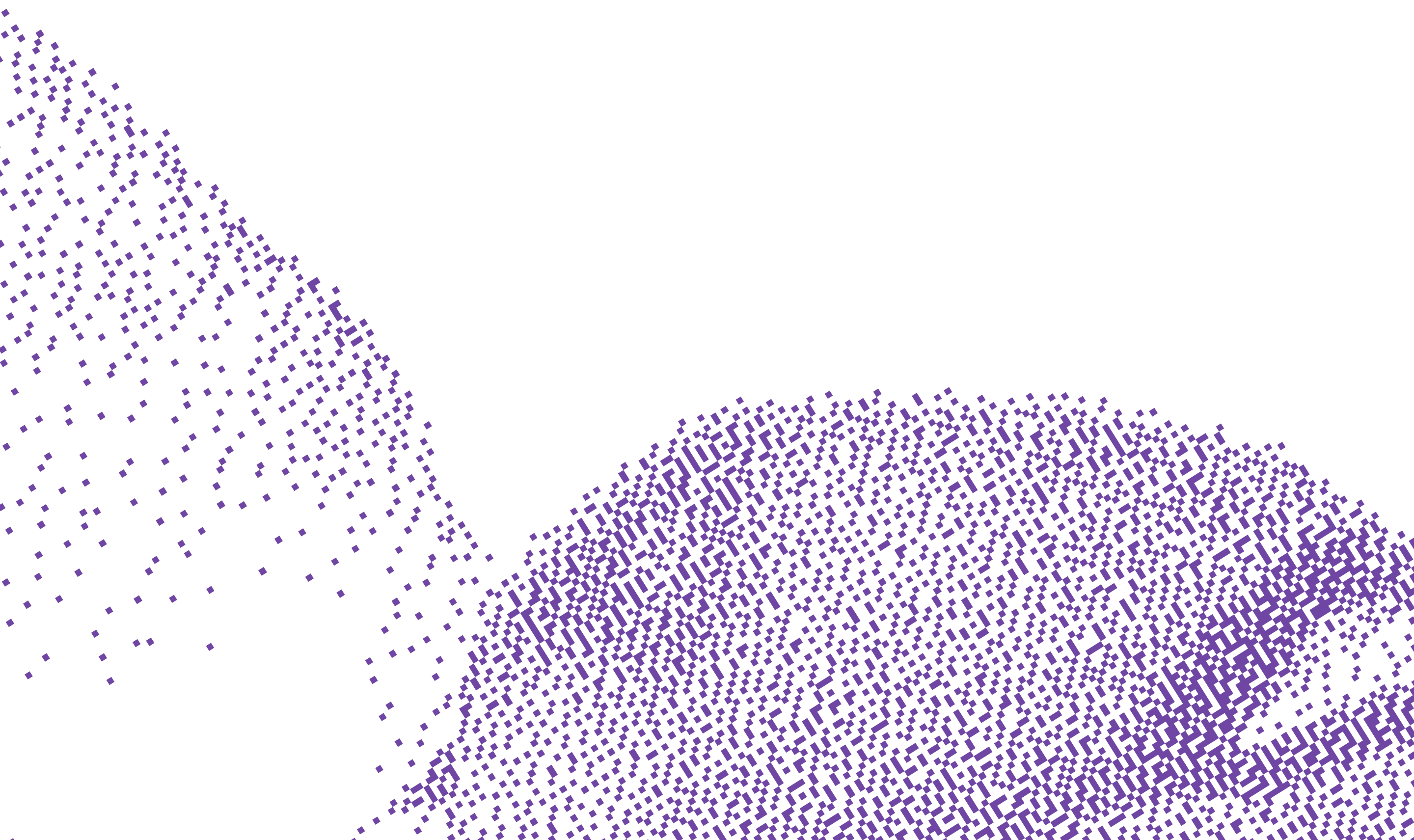
civil protection

If you have suffered domestic abuse and decide to separate, you can present a single submission in court containing both the application for separation and the application for divorce. It is no longer necessary for you to take part in the hearings, so as to avoid you finding yourself face to face with your aggressor. Finally, if the domestic abuse and violence is proven, your aggressor may lose the right to equal custody, i.e. the right for children under the age of 18 to live and grow up with both parents: the refusal of a minor to have contact with a violent parent is considered legitimate.

protection orders against family abuse

The instruments protecting against domestic violence include protection orders against family abuse, which you can use to ask the court to order your spouse, or other aggressor with whom you live, to immediately stop any behaviour that has a severe impact on your physical or moral integrity or your freedom.

The aggressor will be removed from your home and you can also ask the judge to impose a restraining order preventing him from approaching the places you habitually go (home, workplace, school, gym), as well as to pay a monthly sum in your favour.



part 1

***PRACTICAL
TIPS FOR
COPING WITH
DOMESTIC
ABUSE***

are you in an emergency situation?

In this case, call 112 immediately! If you can't talk, you can use the app Whereareyou (the official app of the European emergency number 112, which is available in most regions of Italy) to message an operator and ask for urgent assistance. The app is able to detect your location.

have you just been sexually assaulted?

- If you have access to a hospital with specialist staff (see the insight on emergency gynaecological services), go there for a gynaecological examination, STI and HIV tests and collection of biological samples for forensic use. You can ask for preventive treatment against pregnancy and STIs
- Don't change your clothes and don't wash, so as to preserve evidence. If you find that impossible, take those clothes with you to the hospital or police station
- If you decide to file a complaint, tell the hospital staff, so that they can call the police



who to contact

112 – call immediately in the following cases:

- physical aggression or a threat of physical aggression
- psychological abuse
- fleeing with your children (to avoid being reported
- child abduction);
- the aggressor's possession of firearms.

If you can't talk, use the app Whereareyou to ask for immediate assistance.

1522 – anti-violence and anti-stalking number:

- active 24/7 and free of charge from both landlines and mobile phones, with assistance in Italian, English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, Albanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Portuguese and Polish;
- also available as an App 1522 on iOS and Android, message the operators;
- you can also chat online through the site 1522.eu.

Emergency room (pronto soccorso): seek help there if you need immediate medical treatment. The medical and social workers will be able to guide you towards an abuse exit programme.

Anti-violence centres (Centri

Antiviolenza - CAV): these offer free psycho-legal services (you can find your nearest centre here).

Family counselling clinics

(Consultori): search online for a map/list of clinics active in Italy and

Italian Social Security Service

(INPS): offers help and services to abuse victims (for example, paid leave, reddito di libertà (freedom income), ADI (inclusion allowance), ISEE (equivalent economic situation indicator), accommodation for children in social facilities, etc.): these are summarised in [this dedicated guide](#).

pharmacies: for information, if it is not possible to contact an anti-violence centre or emergency room immediately.

AIDS and STI freephone number

800 861061: for advice on the possible risks of sexually transmitted infections.

YouPol app: developed by the Italian State Police (Polizia di Stato), this enables you to report any incidents, not only of drug dealing and bullying, but also domestic abuse (see their website for more information).

Health centre of the National Institute for Health, Migration and Poverty (NIHMP): offers medical and psychological assistance to vulnerable women.

Psychological and legal support: seek help from trusted professionals or associations like [DonneXStrada](#).

have you witnessed domestic abuse?

If you are a witness of harassment or violence within a relationship, ask yourself, thoughtfully and responsibly:

- Do I feel/am I able to do something?
- Could I be putting myself in danger too?
- Can I call someone else to intervene?

Straightaway

In an emergency, call 112. For example, if you're a neighbour who can hear a violent argument and you think it's an emergency, call the police (112) and, based on your answers to the above three questions and the advice given to you by the police, decide what other actions you can take. If you feel able, knock on the victim's door with an excuse to enable her to get away from the house.

If you see an assault taking place

Use the 5D method.

- **Distract:** get the aggressor's attention away from the victim
- **Delegate:** ask for help from the police or someone more capable of intervening
- **Document:** observe and note down any details, but don't publish anything without the victim's permission
- **Declare and express yourself:** interrupt the assault by talking to the aggressor or his victim
- **Demonstrate support:** reassure the victim by talking to her quietly and calmly, offering her support and helping her call the police, if necessary

is someone close to you a victim of domestic abuse?

If her life is in danger:

- call 112 or use the app [Whereareyou](#);
- don't put yourself in danger: wait for the emergency services to arrive;
- cooperate by giving your testimony and accompanying the victim.

If someone close to you confides that she is a victim of abuse:

- talk to her quietly and calmly, without judgement;
- recognise that what happened is not OK and is not her fault;
- listen with empathy and offer the help she needs;
- if she agrees, help her contact the police or someone she trusts;
- keep your knowledge about her and the event confidential;
- briefly explain what she could do and whom she could contact (CAV, 1522, local associations, psychological and legal support).

If you suspect that someone you know is being abused, there are some warning signs or red flags you should look out for:

- Psychological signs: fear, anxiety, stress, panic attacks, depression
- Behavioural signs: being late for or absent from work, social isolation
- Physical signs: bruises, burns, fractures

If you notice any of these signs and think this might be the situation, you can always contact any associations active in your area, such as support services for abuse victims, to get more information and find out what to do. Always remember the freephone number 1522, the CAV (Anti-violence Centres) and family counselling clinics in your area, and associations such as DonneXStrada, NGOs, and specialist social services and organisations.

some general advice

- Do not judge, victim-blame or minimise what the victim tells you
- Avoid questions that might be embarrassing or suggest you are judging her
- Don't impose your point of view and don't take any hasty actions
- Always remember to respect the victim's privacy and choices
- Speak calmly and with empathy
- Make sure that she is alone or away from her aggressor
- Offer your help and accompany her to somewhere she can find help, if she agrees
- Respect her decision if she doesn't want to act straightaway
- Show your support and be there for her along her journey

information on emergency gynaecological services

If you have been a victim of assault, you can seek help at an emergency gynaecological service.

If your condition permits it, especially if you are in a large city with more than one hospital, you may be directed by medical staff to an emergency room that has a specific process for assault victims active 24/7: you may be transferred to one of these if your case is more complex or if the findings need to be reported in the presence of a forensic specialist.

Here you can find a list, albeit not exhaustive, of hospitals with specialist staff.

Otherwise, you can search on the internet using the key words “ospedale con codice rosa” + your city or province.

The following information is taken from the recommendations of the Association of Italian Hospital Gynaecologists and Obstetricians (AOGOI) for the care of sexual assault victims.

What happens when you seek help?

On arrival, you should be accompanied to a dedicated room that ensures your privacy and security and that you can stay in for as long as you remain in the facility.

The staff should talk to you using a calm voice, without expressing any surprise or disbelief, with completely non-judgemental words and behaviour.

It is important that medical staff do not ask you any questions about the assault in the presence of any male family members or friends, or children over the age of 2.

For immigrants, refugees and women from ethnic minorities who don't speak Italian, an interpreter should be present. Family members should not be used as interpreters.

The medical staff will have to obtain your consent for the entire procedure and for the communication of any information to third parties. Your questions or choices should be given preference at every stage.

- **Collection of information:** your statement should be taken in a suitable private space, in a manner respectful of your person and your physical and psychological condition, with an empathetic, non-judgemental attitude, allowing you to take the time you need and accepting that you might not want to talk about some of the aspects of what happened. Remember that everything you are asked has the sole purpose of arranging adequate assistance for you. If the health workers are male, you may ask for a female member of staff to also be present. The doctor and other health workers are not responsible for establishing the truth or plausibility of your account, and it is their duty to always explain the reason for their questions, especially those about your previous sexual relations.
- **General physical examination:** may need to undergo a thorough examination, including not only your genitals but also the rest of your body, to check for the presence of any other

signs of violence, such as ecchymoses, scratches, bruises and cigarette burns. Your consent will be requested at every step.

- **Gynaecological examination:** it is not very common to find injuries to the vulvar or hymen after a sexual assault. Vaginal injuries are exceptional. Depending on the time since the assault (within 7-10 days at most), you may have sterile swab tests various parts of your body to collect the aggressor's sperm and other genetic material. Sperm may still be present 6 hours (mouth), 1-3 days (rectum and outer genitals) or up to 7-10 days (cervical canal) after the assault.
- **Toxicology tests:** if you have partial amnesia or a confused memory of the sexual assault, a sample of your blood or urine may also be taken and sent to a forensic toxicology laboratory for testing against a broad range of drugs. The unusual consumption (whether voluntary or involuntary) of alcohol and/or narcotics is the most common factor facilitating assault, in the experience of many centres. It may therefore be appropriate to take a sample for urgent alcohol and/or drug tests. Remember that if you were drunk during the assault, this is an aggravating factor for the offence, not a justification for the aggressor. For more information see Part 2
- **Emergency contraception:** if you ask for it and if the examination takes place within 24-48 hours of the assault, you might be offered emergency contraception.


- **Prophylaxis against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)**
 - HIV: prophylaxis is recommended in the event of bleeding genital injuries or anal penetration, if you were assaulted by more than one aggressor, if your aggressor has a high risk of being HIV-positive, and/or if you request it. Prophylaxis has proven effective if administered in the first 24 hours.
 - Other STDs (chlamydia, gonorrhoea): antibiotic prophylaxis may be prescribed if there is a risk of transmission (unknown aggressor or partner known to have promiscuous sexual activity with a high risk of STD transmission).



part 2

***VIOLENCE
OUTSIDE AN
INTIMATE
RELATIONSHIP***

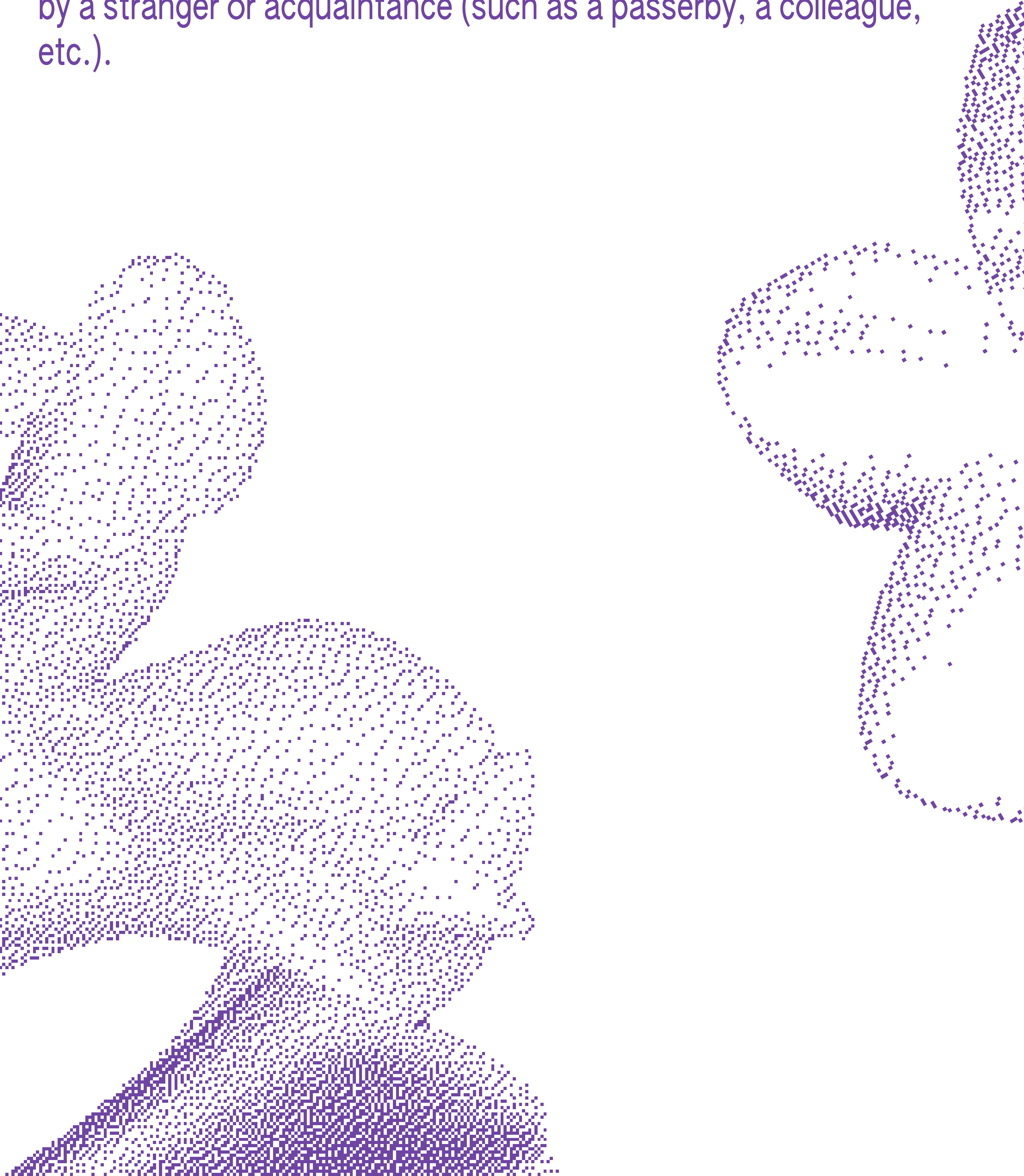
***(committed
by a stranger
or acquaintance)***



part 2

In part 2 of this guide, we will discuss the forms of violence against women that happen outside a relationship with a partner or ex-partner, whether or not you are living with them.

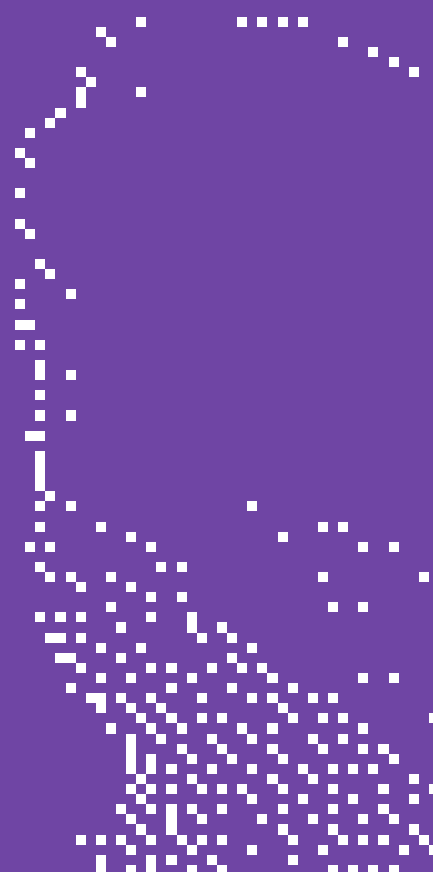
You will find useful information on all forms of violence that take place outside your home or household relationships, committed by a stranger or acquaintance (such as a passerby, a colleague, etc.).





part 2

HARASSMENT



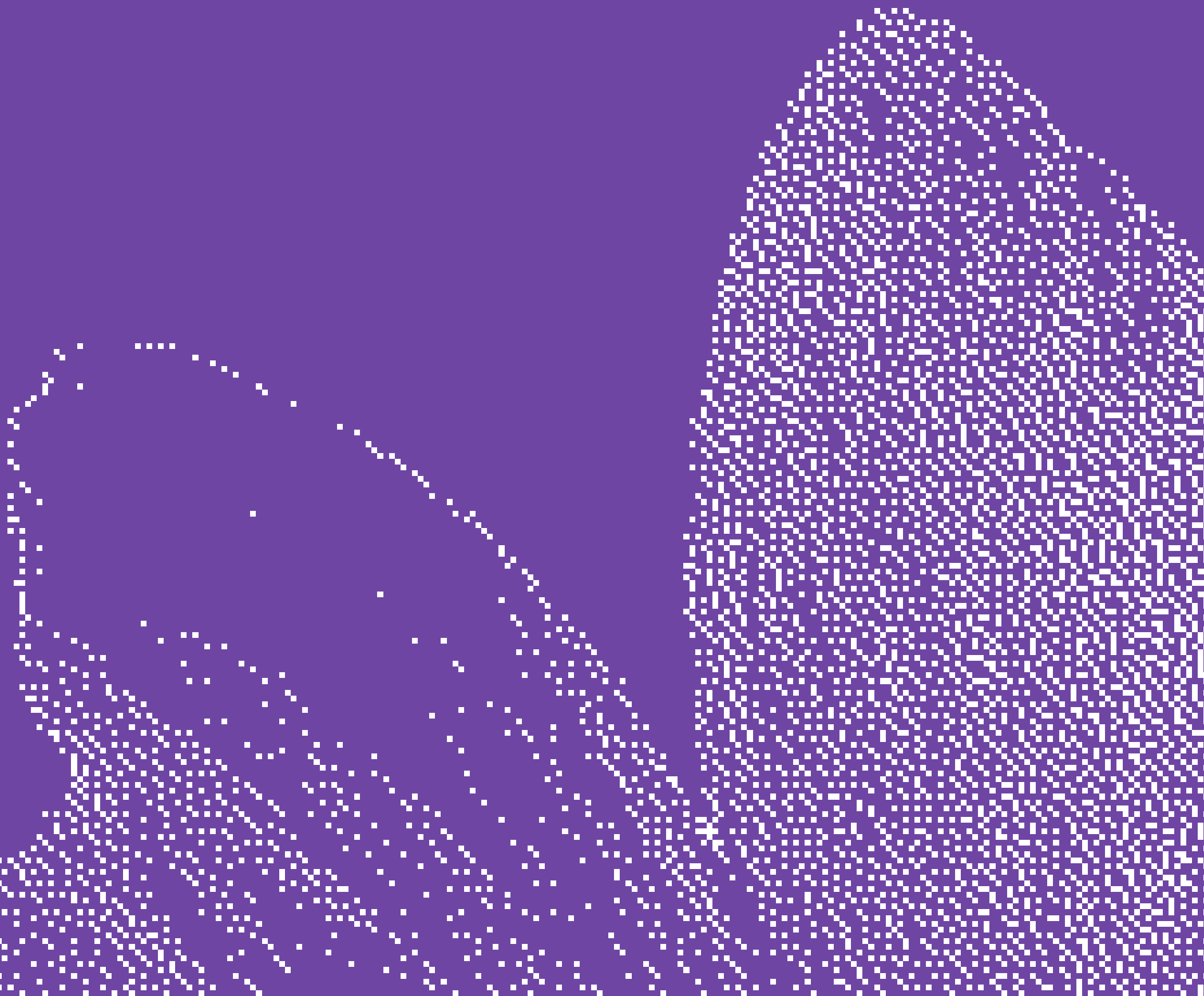


part 2

The offence of harassment (or disturbance of the person) is covered by article 660 of the Italian criminal code, which refers to anyone who harasses or disturbs someone by interfering in their private life in any public space (or through their phone), whether due to a sense of entitlement (and hence arrogance, presumptuousness or annoying intrusiveness) or for other unacceptable motives (and therefore without any valid reason) - for example, if they court you persistently or obsessively, with unwelcome advances.

Sexual harassment does not need to involve any unwanted contact with your intimate parts or erogenous zones - that would be sexual assault.

That, in fact, is the difference between sexual harassment and sexual assault.



TYPES OF HARASSMENT

Let's look in more detail at three different types of harassment:

- sexual harassment;
- harassment in the workplace;
- harassment in the street (catcalling).

sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is any kind of unwanted behaviour with a sexual basis or gender-based discrimination that offends your dignity. It includes physical, verbal and non-verbal behaviours.

Sexual harassment often goes unrecognised. Over the years, in fact, it has often been minimised or normalised; you may have been the victim of harassment or have witnessed it without recognising it, albeit feeling uneasy.

some examples of sexual harassment

- Offensive, unwelcome requests (whether explicit, implicit or in the form of gestures) to perform sexual acts
- Vulgar admiration of or jokes about your body or comments on your sexuality or sexual orientation
- Wolf whistles and whooping in the street to express unwanted admiration (catcalling)

sexual harassment in numbers

18.9%

The percentage of women who have been harassed. Harassment can take place in a number of different contexts and with different perpetrators, such as acquaintances (21%), strangers (21%), and relatives (17%).⁴⁶

70%

The percentage of girls aged 14 to 18 in Italy who say they have suffered harassment and comments of a sexual nature in public places: 64% have been made to feel uncomfortable by comments or advances by an adult in a position of authority, such as a parent, instructor or teacher.⁴⁷

6.4%

The percentage of women aged 14 to 70 who, in 2022-2023, suffered harassment outside the workplace (for men it's 2.7%).⁴⁸

91%

The percentage of women who say they have been harassed by a man outside the workplace.⁴⁹

15%

The percentage of the above cases of harassment that were reported to the police.⁵⁰

76.8%

Percentage of harassments carried out by strangers.⁵¹

6.8%

Percentage of women harassed through social networks.⁵²

sexual violence and harassment in the world of work

Sexual violence and harassment in the world of work According to the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO), "sexual violence and harassment" in the world of work refers to a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices (whether physical, verbal or non-verbal), or threats thereof, with a sexual connotation that result in or are likely to result in a violation of the dignity of the recipient or create an intimidatory, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

While these behaviours may differ, they are linked by their context and potential repercussions, whether in the workplace (effects on career and interpersonal relationships), for the organisation (creation of a humiliating, hostile environment) or on the individual (violation of personal liberty).

It may be difficult to avoid harassment at work because of the nature of the environment (shared spaces and working hours, need to maintain relationships in order to work together), especially if the harassment is perpetrated by a superior.

The fear of losing your job and/or being unable to find another one, of not being believed, or of being ostracised by colleagues, could lead you to underestimate the gravity of what is happening to you or make you feel that you have to put up with the harassment in silence. It's also important to bear in mind that the concept of workplace is intended in its broadest sense, as it includes any business travel, meetings, dinners, lunches, interviews, etc.⁵³

sexual violence and harassment in the world of work in numbers

13.5%

The percentage of women in Italy aged 15 to 70 who have suffered sexual harassment at work over their whole life (especially the youngest age group of 15-24, 21.2%), including offensive glances, taunts, indecent proposals.⁵⁴

7.5%

The percentage of women who have submitted to sexual blackmail in order to obtain or keep a job or receive a promotion.⁵⁵

80.9%

The percentage of cases of harassment in the workplace that are not reported and in which sexual blackmail has been hushed up.⁵⁶

39.8%

The percentage of cases where the victim decided not to submit to the blackmail and left the job. 12.6% of women who have been sexually blackmailed in the last three years were sacked, made redundant or not hired, while in 23.1% of cases there were no repercussions⁵⁷

87.7%

The percentage of women who did not report sexual blackmail (2022-2023).⁵⁸

70%

The percentage of women who have suffered verbal harassment at work that made them feel uncomfortable: 40% received unwanted physical contact, 43% unwanted advances and 27% requests and compliments of a sexual nature.⁵⁹

Street harassment (catcalling)

Catcalling refers to unwanted admiration, generally expressed in relation to women walking along the street or using public transport. Such admiration is expressed by men, usually strangers, who give their unwanted opinion through wolf whistles, insults, gestures or whooping, offensive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, or by following their target.

Such behaviour is often passed off as a compliment by those doing it, but in reality this is verbal harassment of an arrogant and vulgar kind. Such behaviour turns the victims into nothing more than sexual objects, causing them discomfort and fear.

If you have been subjected to catcalling, you might no longer feel safe walking around on your own, whether during the day or at night, going to certain areas of town, or dressing, wearing makeup, or styling your hair in a certain way. Remember: it's not your fault if you're catcalled: you did nothing to provoke it and nothing you can change would ensure you could avoid it. You might feel unable to respond to any comments or taunts; you might feel gratified or pretend you didn't hear them or, in contrast, you might react by facing up to the aggressor: in any case, none of these responses is more appropriate than another.

street harassment in numbers

65%

The percentage of Catalan women who have been sexually harassed on public transport - in London, it's estimated to be more than one-third of women (39%).⁶⁰

1 in 2

The number of Italian women who are afraid to go out alone at night.⁶¹

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF HARASSMENT

When you experience harassment (whether sexual, at work or in the street), you are more exposed to unpleasant and disquieting emotions, which might have a negative impact on your mental health.

These feelings may peak in intensity and then spontaneously fade away or they may become chronic, leaving a negative trace that interferes with how you behave and make decisions. In some cases, harassment can have particularly intrusive, hard-to-swallow consequences, undermining your sense of self-sufficiency or safety, and can be defined as out-and-out traumatic experiences.

A correlation has been found between suffering harassment and the presence of some psychological factors such as anxiety, depression, sense of guilt, shame, insecurity and sleep disorders. Anxiety may be linked to frustration, worry and alarm in relation to the harassment and the possibility that it might happen again. Depression is often associated with a feeling of powerlessness, shame and guilt.

Bear in mind that harassment may be characterised by ambiguity. This can be found in the double level of communication, such as when someone smiles while saying something unpleasant and offensive, thus creating an incongruence between what you hear and what you see. Such ambiguity can contribute to the development of feelings of doubt and guilt in the recipient of the harassment.

The effects of harassment, especially if sexual in nature, often have repercussions on the image that women have of their own body, potentially causing them to develop insecurities and guilt about individual characteristics such as their physical appearance,

their clothes and their behaviour, instilling the doubt that they themselves are to blame for the harassment they have suffered.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF HARASSMENT

Harassment is an offence committed “in public spaces,” i.e. in places where everyone can go all the time (such as streets, town squares, gardens, parks) or in places “open to the public,” i.e. those where people can go at certain times under certain circumstances (such as the cinema, theatre or football stadium).

Subjectively, it must involve malice: the perpetrator must be motivated by a sense of entitlement or other unacceptable motive, with the main aim being to provoke and unreasonably interfere with another person’s sphere of liberty.

As already mentioned, this offence relates to the expression of sexual comments or invasive advances alone. If the harassment involves bodily contact or touching the intimate or erogenous zones (such as with groping), this comprises the more serious offence of sexual assault (which we will discuss below).

In Italy, there is currently no specific law against catcalling or sexual harassment in the workplace; for this reason, the generic law against harassment, as described above, tends to be applied. If you are a victim of sexual harassment you can file a complaint against your aggressor - even after a single incident - within 90 days of the event. However, if you are incapable, due to age or infirmity, the offence can be prosecuted automatically.

During the court proceedings, you can constitute the claimant, to obtain compensation of damages. Your statements, as well as those of any witnesses, and any recordings you managed to make during the incidents of harassment, will be important during the proceedings. We suggest that you collect evidence of the harassment, such as emails, text messages and statements from any colleagues.

In addition, for harassment in the workplace your employers, who have the obligation to safeguard your safety, dignity and psychophysical health, must take action against the co-worker who is harassing you, such as by firing him, because otherwise they will be liable to pay damages.

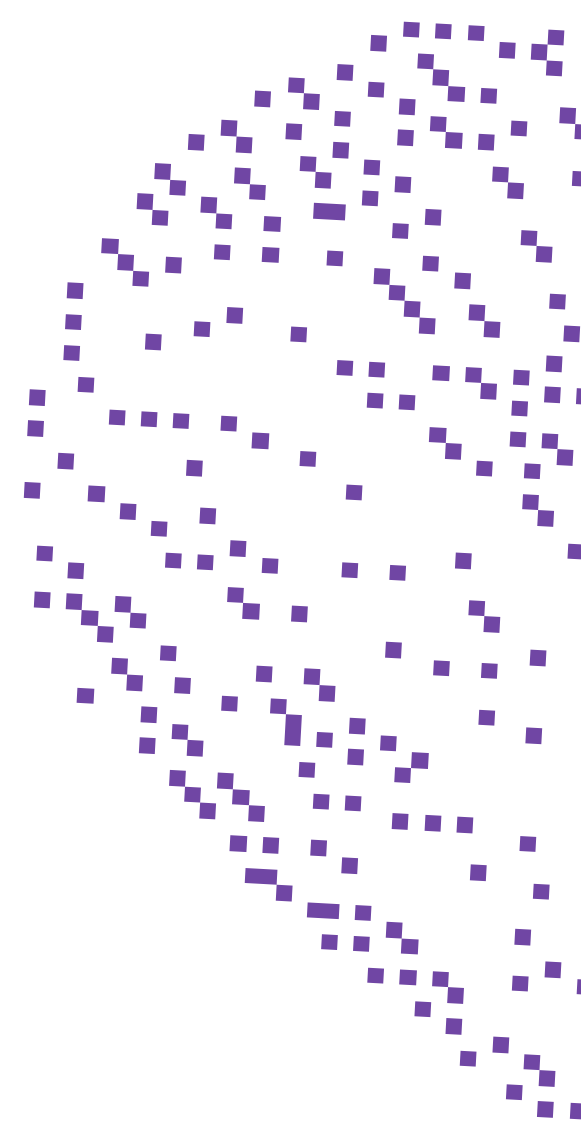
PRACTICAL TIPS FOR COPING WITH HARASSMENT

are you a victim of harassment?

If you are a victim of harassment, you can use and call all the contacts listed in Part 1 (call 112, 1522, the police or carabinieri, go there physically, contact an anti-violence centre, etc.).

Remember: harassment is an act of violence that men perform to instil an imbalance of power, to control you, and to make you feel ill at ease. It's not a compliment!

Every woman reacts differently to harassment, depending on how she feels, how much she wants (or doesn't want) to react, where she is, in what circumstances, if she's alone or with friends.



Harassers often don't expect a reaction: they think that their target will stay silent in a position of fear and inferiority, or even appreciate the comment as "flattery." It has been seen that in many cases, answering back to a harasser is such an unexpected and surprising reaction that it can radically change the situation.

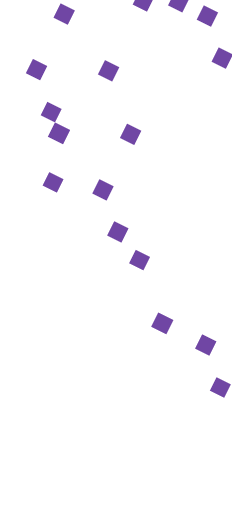
However, some men may be so destabilised by your reaction that they become even more aggressive: in this case, it's helpful to have your phone to hand, to film what's happening or call your friends - or even a dedicated service, such as our Viola Walk Home switchboard, to keep you company if you're worried about having to walk part of your route on your own, or to find a safe place (such as a DonnexStrada Punto Viola) where you can wait until the man goes away.

Whatever strategy you choose, make sure it's the one that makes you feel most safe and secure. If your aggressor reacts unexpectedly and even more aggressively, remember that it's not your fault. No one is ever prepared to deal with harassment out of the blue, so don't blame yourself for how you responded, and don't let it make you feel guilty.

are you a victim of sexual harassment and assault at work?

It's important to report the harassment as soon as possible, to prevent the situation from worsening and enable prompt action.

Check whether your employers have a harassment policy or code of ethics, or check their website to find out if there are any dedicated channels for reports of this kind. In some cases, your employers may specify that such reports must only be forwarded through the dedicated "whistleblowing" channel, which guarantees confidentiality and anonymity (at the whistleblower's



discretion. Your employers may also make a helpline available to their employees, generally managed by third parties. Some companies have designed their whistleblowing channel in such a way that you interact with them, answer messages and provide clarifications while still remaining anonymous. Depending on how you feel and the options you have available, you may decide to also tell your superiors or the Human Resources Department.

If it's actually your employer or superior who is assaulting or harassing you - which, above all, is an aggravating circumstance - don't hesitate to report this, even if only anonymously.

Remember that anyone investigating reports made anonymously, or for which little corroborating evidence was provided, will have more difficulty in establishing the facts and taking action. In relation to evidence, we suggest that you log any episodes of harassment, keep screenshots of any messages or emails you receive, and ask any colleagues who saw these events if they would be willing to act as witnesses on your behalf.

You can also report the harassment to the Labour Inspectorate on a dedicated form, in accordance with Legislative Decree no. 149/2015, to the competent authorities and organisations, or to unions, trade associations or other organisations protecting workers' rights.

In order to protect yourself and obtain prompt action, as a victim, you may consider whether to ask for a transfer or for your aggressor to be transferred or suspended, which your employers can arrange following an internal investigation and/or, if you report the offence to the police, on the basis of any judicial findings. You may request medical or psychological support if you are suffering from stress or anxiety due to the situation, and discuss it with the doctor. ⁶²

have you witnessed or become aware of a case of harassment?

If you are a witness of harassment, the advice listed in Part 1 is applicable here, too.

If you are aware of a case of harassment in the workplace, ask for help from specialists able to give you advice on what to do and give you more information (family counselling clinics, anti-violence centres, pharmacies, psychologists, associations like DXS, Labour Inspectorate, tax assistance centres (Centro di Assistenza Fiscale CAF), the police, etc.). This is a very delicate topic and we can't go to someone we don't know directly and ask them questions, as we would risk placing them in danger or making them feel ashamed. It's essential to respect the victim's own wishes on when and how to report the incident.

is someone close to you a victim of harassment?

Talk to her openly about your concerns and ask if she would like you to help and support her.

Tell her about the places she can turn to (family counselling clinics, anti-violence centres, pharmacies, psychologists, associations like DXS, Labour Inspectorate, tax assistance centres, the police, etc.) and go with her if she needs you to. Say close, support her, listen to her frustrations, fears and pain without judging or giving advice, without telling her what to do: leave her free to experience her own emotions, ask her what she wants to do and support and help her at every step of the way. Here too, for more information you can consult the [section of Part 1](#).

part 2

***SEXUAL
VIOLENCE
(OUTSIDE AN
INTIMATE
RELATIONSHIP)***

part 2

Article 609 of the criminal code contemplates two types of sexual violence:

- the first is **sexual abuse by force** and refers to the behaviour of any person who, by violence or threat or by means of abuse of authority, forces someone to commit or to endure sexual acts;
- the second is **sexual abuse by coercion**, which refers to the behaviour of any person who induces someone to commit or to endure sexual acts by abusing their condition of physical or mental inferiority at the time of the event.

Coercion involves a behaviour that does not act directly against the victim, but instead uses other ways to gain her acquiescence. It's not just a type of deceitful persuasion, but includes any form of abuse of power against the victim, who, due to her feeling of helplessness, is subjugated to the will of her aggressor.

sexual violence in numbers

31.5%

Women aged 16 to 70 who say they have experienced some kind of physical or sexual assault over their lifetime: 21% have been the victim of sexual assault and 5.4% of rape, meaning forced sexual intercourse, or attempted rape, and in 10.6% of cases this was before they turned 16.⁶³

+40%

The increase in sexual assaults in the last 10 years (from 4,488 cases in 2013 to 6,291 in 2022, in which 91% of the victims were female).⁶⁴

1/3

Rape victims under the age of 18. ⁶⁵

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual assault is a traumatic experience. It involves a violation of the body's boundaries, with a significant psychophysical impact on the women subjected to it.

Following a sexual assault you may alternate between a state of shock, leading to sensations of confusion and detachment, and a state of hyper-agitation, causing you to feel invaded by distressing emotions and physical sensations. Shock sometimes manifests as a feeling of numbness, freezing or tiredness, while agitation may involve the psychomotor system and hence manifest with intrusive thoughts, memories and dreams or a state of hypervigilance and hyperactivity.

Remember that sexual assaults can happen in very different ways. However it happens, sexual assault often causes damage to the victim's self-image. Long term consequences may include a feeling of being in danger, feeling guilty or as if you deserved to be assaulted, feeling unlucky or beaten down, or feeling dirty.

It's also very important to know that while sexual assault may be associated with terrible psychophysical pain or a sense of powerlessness so strong as to cause dissociative detachment, it can also cause physical and mental arousal. When present, this arousal often increases the victim's sense of guilt, as it may be misunderstood as having wanted to be raped. In reality, any pleasure you may feel is not indicative of consent, nor of desire, but is more related to a psychophysical reflex and a defensive reaction aimed at managing the assault. Eroticisation of the assault may be an attempt at regaining control where you feel you've lost it.

After a sexual assault, it may be very useful to ask to see a psychologist to understand the complexity of such psychological aspects and decide whether to begin a course of psychotherapy in order to process the trauma. Sexual assault can lead to the development of various clinical conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depressive disorders and eating disorders.

See the relevant section for more information on the specific clinical conditions that may arise.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is now considered a serious crime against the person and their right to sexual self-determination, although until 1996 it was an offence against public morality and decency.

As explained above, there are two types of sexual violence: by force and by coercion. The presence of “force, violence and threats” makes the absence of the victim’s consent clear. Consent must be given from the beginning to the end of the sexual act, meaning that you can change your mind and say you want to stop at any time.

Your dissent may be explicit, for example by saying “No,” “I don’t want to,” “Enough,” or “Stop,” but it may also be implicit, meaning that it could be deduced from a multitude of factors, regardless of any physical findings on your body. In fact, dissent can be inferred from “conclusive facts,” as long as they are unambiguous: for example if you scream or cry, if you show pain, if you try to get away, if you try to leave a room that you’d entered voluntarily.

If a sexual act is initially “normal” but then turns violent (and you don’t want this), or if the man decides to ejaculate (come) inside you without your explicit or implicit consent (for example by removing a condom, a practice known as “stealthing”), this is sexual assault.

“Assault” doesn’t only mean physical violence, but also includes any act that leads to a limitation of the victim’s liberty, forcing her to perform or endure sexual acts against her will; for that reason, it also includes psychological intimidation. Violence and threats – meaning the expression of an intention to cause you harm (such as “I’ll kill you,” “I’ll hurt you”) - may be so frightening that they completely wipe out your own free will, or significantly limit it.

With violence by coercion, the perpetrator profits from the victim’s powerlessness, distress or diminished resistance, or her physical or mental incapacity caused by the use of alcohol or drugs, to induce her to perform or endure sexual acts.

Sexual violence does not just refer to rape, but also to any other “sexual act,” meaning acts involving the genitals and/or the erogenous zones (mouth, thighs, cheeks, buttocks). It also includes sudden, unexpected sexual acts or those performed without your knowledge (for example because you’re asleep).

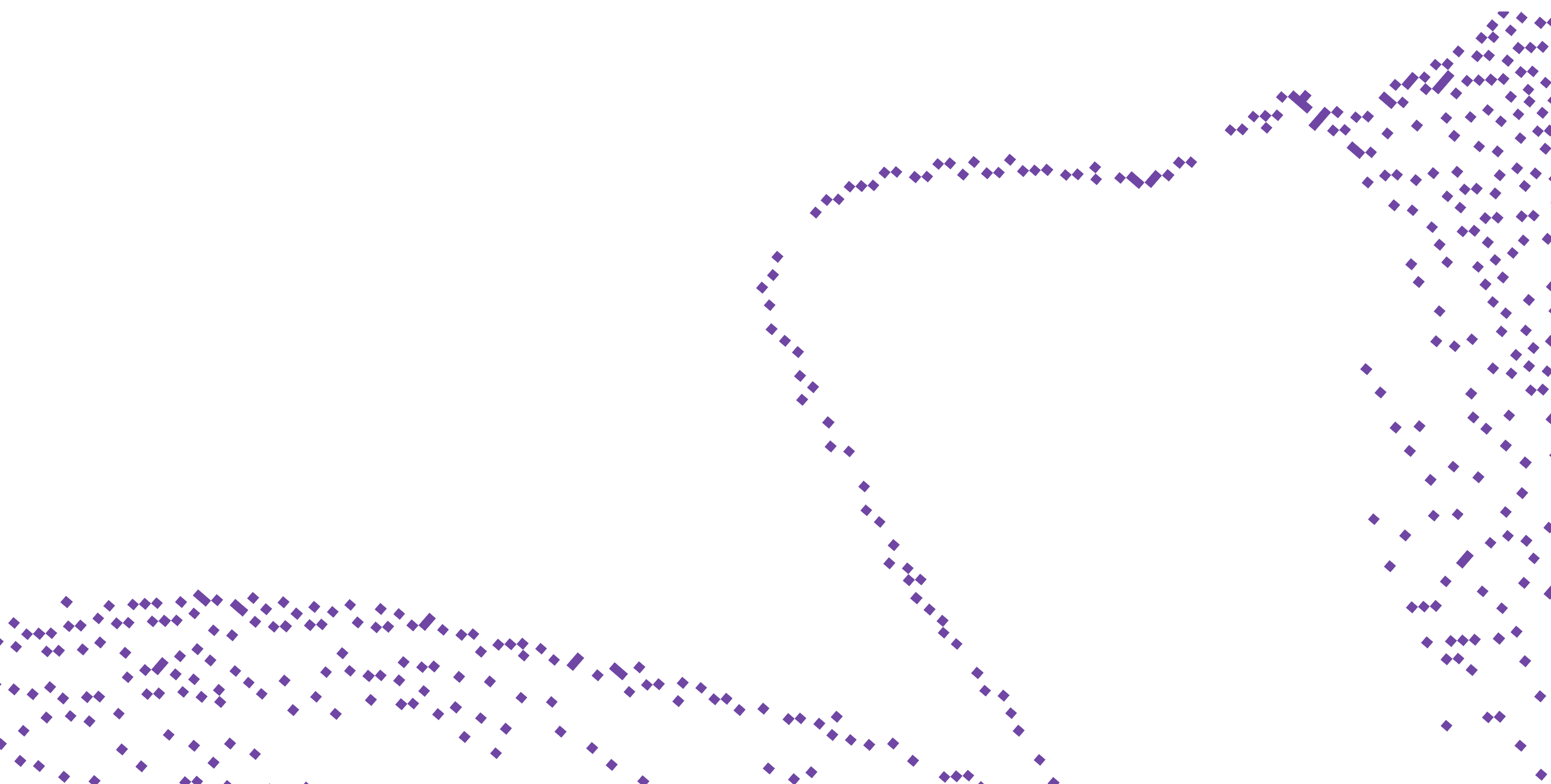
It’s not important why a man forces you or coerces you to perform or endure sexual acts: it’s enough that he is aware that you have not expressed your consent. It doesn’t matter if he says, for example, that it was just a bit of fun, an excuse often used for “minor offences” (which attract a lighter sentence), such as a kiss on the mouth or cheek, or groping or rubbing up against you. In fact, sexual violence refers to any act capable - according to scientific and cultural norms - of satisfying or sparking sexual pleasure or arousal, regardless of the man’s intentions, as long as he is aware of the sexual nature of the act, did it knowingly and voluntarily, and knows that the victim did not consent.

Sexual violence can also be carried out at a distance – and hence without any physical contact – through a smartphone or computer and webcam, or even via a chat, for example if you are coerced into carrying out sexual acts on yourself during a phone conversation or videocall.

The offence is more serious if any firearms, alcohol, or narcotics are used, if you are not yet 18, if you are pregnant, or if the perpetrator is a member of your family, one of your parents, your husband (even if you are separated or divorced), or a person with whom you have an emotional tie (in this latter case, see the section in Part 1).

Remember that if you have not yet turned 14, any sexual acts you perform or endure are always considered an offence, even if you consent, because under Italian law you acquire sexual liberty at the age of 14.

This is also true if you are under 16 and the perpetrator is a member of your family, a parent (including adoptive parents), your guardian or another person you live with, or someone to whose care you are entrusted (for reasons of treatment, education, security or custody). If you are over 13 years old and voluntarily carry out sexual acts with another minor, this is not punishable, as long as the age difference between you is less than 4 years.



legal instruments available to the victim

If you are the victim of sexual violence, you have 12 months within which to file a complaint (not 90 days, as with many other offences). In fact, people often need time process the assault.

If the offence was committed by a public official, family member or parent, or the victim is under the age of 18, the offence is prosecuted automatically even if the victim does not file a complaint. In the criminal proceedings you can constitute the claimant, to obtain compensation of damages.

As there are generally no witnesses to such offences, your statements will be very important: these alone can, without needing additional evidence, be used to establish criminal responsibility, provided that your credibility and the reliability of your account, meaning its consistency and plausibility, can be established. Don't worry: you only need to tell the truth.

However, if anyone else was present, they will be important witnesses: they might have seen or heard something, such as the sexual act itself, or have seen you leave with the suspect looking scared or worried.

If you went to an emergency room, keep the reports, as they could confirm your statements (genetic evidence, meaning the use of DNA, is a test method to establish the identity of the aggressor).

If you managed to make a video or audio recording through your smartphone, keep it carefully (for example by saving it on a PC): it will be considered as evidence demonstrating the assault.

Sexual assault victims are often scared of public opinion, because “she was wearing skimpy clothing,” “she didn’t scream,” “she provoked him,” “she was easy,” “she was a good-for-nothing,” “she was drunk,” “she was asking for it”: this is known as victim-blaming. Don’t be scared, and above all, don’t let your fear stop you from filing a complaint. Ultimately, judges tend to condemn victim-blaming, pointing out that the only true perpetrator of this crime is the aggressor.

If you have been assaulted or harassed at work and you decide not to file a complaint, you can in any case talk to your superiors or the HR Manager, or begin a whistleblowing procedure. Your employers will carry out an internal investigation and, depending on the evidence they find, they could discipline or fire the perpetrator, as explained in more detail in the section on harassment and violence in the workplace.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR COPING WITH SEXUAL VIOLENCE

See Part 1

gang rape

Gang rape is a crime in itself, contemplated by art. 609 octies of the criminal code, and so is not an aggravating circumstance for the offence of sexual assault.

It consists of the participation of two or more people acting together to commit sexual assault. Specifically, the assault, whether through force (hence involving violence, threats or abuse of authority) or coercion (involving abuse of the victim's physical or psychological inferiority or deceit of the victim), is carried out by more than one person.

1 in 3

Victims of gang rape who are minors.⁶⁶

60%

The percentage of gang rape victims who are under 25.⁶⁷

67%

The percentage of perpetrators aged between 14 and 17. Around 18% are aged 18 to 24.⁶⁸

Around a third of gang rape victims have not yet reached the age of 18, and the perpetrators are also often minors when the victim herself is a minor.⁶⁹ These numbers don't take account of any "hidden" assaults, meaning those that were not reported.

Gang rape is a crime involving multiple perpetrators, as it necessarily involves more than one aggressor.

"Involvement" doesn't necessarily mean that all the members of the gang committed violent acts, just that each one of them contributed in some way. This contribution may be material (committing sexual acts or physically helping someone else in the gang to commit them) or moral, by bolstering the determination of a single perpetrator through their presence (such as by inciting him). Even if they don't actively take part, the fact of their presence at the time and place of the assault encourages the entire gang and produces greater physical and psychological effects on the victim (for example, by inciting the perpetrators, laughing, or deriding the victim) than would a sexual assault committed by a single perpetrator. In the case of bystanders - meaning someone who was passively and incidentally present in the location where the assault was taking place - no offence has been committed, as long as they can demonstrate that they were not encouraging or helping the perpetrators in any way. Anyone whose contribution was of minimal importance in the preparation or commitment of the offence - that is, in the case of minimal, very slight and marginal participation - the judge might concede attenuating circumstances. The offence of gang rape is also committed when someone continues a sexual assault carried out by others. This is an automatically prosecutable offence: there is no need for the victim to file a complaint.

alcohol and date-rape drugs

The consumption of alcohol and narcotics can lower your inhibitions and affect your attention, leading to the risk of finding yourself in dangerous situations.

It may happen that someone tries to convince you to drink alcohol (or take drugs that have a sedative or mind-altering effect) to facilitate sex or sexual acts. Even worse is when the victim is drugged without her knowledge, so that she can then be abused. This is the case with date-rape drugs, which cause the victim to pass out, making her incapable of reacting and objecting.

There is an increase in cases of women waking up in the morning with signs of sexual assault, without remembering a thing. They only remember that they were out somewhere in a bar and they had something to drink. In fact, these drugs, which are tasteless and colourless, are used to “spike” a drink when the victim is distracted.

Another way to drug the victim is by using a tiny syringe that leaves an almost invisible hole, which after a few days is surrounded by bruises (needle-spiking or injection spiking). If the drug use is induced by the perpetrator in order to commit the assault, the offence is aggravated. The offence of sexual assault (including gang rape) with abuse of the victim’s condition of physical or mental inferiority also exists when the victim has voluntarily taken alcohol or drugs, because this reduces her capacity.

Pay attention when your cocktail is being prepared and don’t leave your glass unattended.

gynaecological consequences of sexual assault outside an intimate relationship

If you are sexually assaulted by someone you don't know, there is a risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD).

STDs can be contracted through vaginal, oral and rectal sexual contact with an infected person. The most common bacterial STDs are chlamydia, gonorrhoea, trichomonas and syphilis. The most serious viral STDs are HIV, hepatitis B, genital herpes and papilloma virus (of which some strains cause genital warts, while others are correlated with cervical cancer). For more information see Part 1.

There is a considerable variation in the transmission of STDs after a sexual assault. The highest reported prevalences are for bacterial vaginosis, at 19%, and trichomoniasis, reaching 12%, while transmission of gonorrhoea (4%) and chlamydia (2%) is relatively low. The risk of contracting syphilis or genital herpes is even lower, and the risk of contracting HIV is extremely low. However, it's very important to be aware of these risks.

How can I find out?

Some STDs cause symptoms such as itching, pain, discharges of different consistencies and colours, bleeding, genital sores or pain in the lower abdomen. These symptoms may arise days, weeks or even longer after the initial infection. However, the presence or absence of these symptoms is not sufficient to know if you are infected. Many people don't have any symptoms at all. For HIV too, the symptoms of acute infection are indefinite. In the vast majority of cases, the disease does not cause any symptoms. However, recently infected people may experience fever, muscle pain, enlarged lymph nodes, and tiredness in the first few weeks: all symptoms that can be mistaken for the flu. The same symptoms may also be seen in the case of infection with hepatitis B, together with nausea and vomiting, jaundice (a yellow colouration of the skin), and dark urine. It should be noted that almost everyone in Italy has been vaccinated against hepatitis B, meaning both that they are protected against the risk of infection and that the aggressor himself is unlikely to be infected, unless he has not been vaccinated.

Practical tips

After a sexual assault, it's important to see a doctor as soon as possible. If you have an examination within 120 hours of the assault, the doctor examining you will be able to give you some medication if there is any risk that you have been exposed to these infections.

You may be offered post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) against HIV with antiretroviral drugs if you see a doctor within 72 hours.

PEP reduces the chance of the HIV infection taking hold in your body after exposure. As already said, the risk of contracting an infection after a single sexual exposure is very low. Vaginal or anal penetration of part of the penis or contact with secretions, seminal fluid and blood are the most likely routes of HIV transmission during a sexual assault.

There are a number of facilities, such as emergency rooms and test laboratories, which can offer specific tests and examinations for these infections. You can also find out if your town or city has a specialist STD clinic (generally found as part of an infectious disease or dermatology unit). This is a dedicated clinic where anyone who thinks they might have been infected can go for free or low-cost confidential testing for HIV and other STDs. If the assault/rape victim isn't ready to go to an emergency room or a hospital facility (whether due to fear, threats, a state of shock, a wish to avoid having to talk about the incident or another reason) immediately or within a few days after the assault, she can go to an STD clinic or test laboratory for screening, although this may cause a delay in the initiation of any antibiotic therapy or PEP which, in the case of HIV, may no longer be possible.

For more information on going to an emergency room, the “codice rosa” indicating a specialist rape centre, the gynaecological examination and emergency contraception, see the dedicated “insight” box.

Pain and sexual dysfunction as consequences of assault

The pelvic floor muscles act by trying to protect the body. They contract when they perceive that something is physically or emotionally unsafe, as part of the activation of the sympathetic nervous system with the “fight or flight” response. In some cases, this can lead to a persistent muscle tension and myofascial pain, which is exacerbated by sexual activity.

Experiencing pain during sex, especially penetrative sex, often leads to even greater muscle tension, pain and emotional distress. In adult women, having been raped doubles the chance of developing sexual problems. In addition, women who were sexually abused in childhood have more problems in adulthood, such as a lack of interest in sex, difficulty in achieving orgasm, painful sex or sexual dissatisfaction. Victims report a greater number of negative effects during arousal than women without a history of sexual abuse. The most common problems are lubrication, arousal and orgasm. Abdominal or pelvic pain, vulvodynia, pain due to irritable bowel syndrome and pain during a gynaecological exam also seem to be associated with a history of sexual abuse.

All these symptoms are indicative of a hypertonic pelvic floor. An explanation for this association might be that the arousal caused by sexual stimulation and activity is diminished by the negative connotations associated with the previous rape.

PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) may also manifest with a hypertonic pelvic floor, as part of a generalised defence mechanism. A hypertonic pelvic floor can directly cause sexual problems, such as by obstructing blood flow to the genitals during sex.

A prompt diagnosis of any sexual dysfunction is therefore extremely important. In treating sexual and pelvic floor dysfunctions, the first step is to identify the underlying cause.

In clinical practice, exercises to relax the pelvic floor, sensory focalisation exercises and a gradual exposure to positive sexual stimuli and experiences, during which the patient maintains complete control, are used to enable her to (re-)gain a sense of trust in herself so that she can reduce her hypervigilance

Mindfulness can also be very valuable. A number of studies have found that the use of this technique in women with a history of childhood sexual abuse improved their sensations during sex and reduced their distress. Mindfulness training helps women focus their awareness, moment by moment, on a greater range of stimuli during sexual activity.

Sexual and pelvic dysfunctions are chronic, complex disorders that, even today, are unfortunately often neglected. Various health professions receive professional training in pelvic floor rehabilitation (including doctors, obstetricians and physiotherapists). These therapists are specifically trained to treat many of the abovementioned physical disorders, to confirm that the signs and symptoms that their patient is experiencing actually have a deeper root and, consequently, provide a safe space for these patients to regain their physical and mental equilibrium.



part 2

***UNLAWFUL
SHARING OF
INTIMATE
IMAGES***



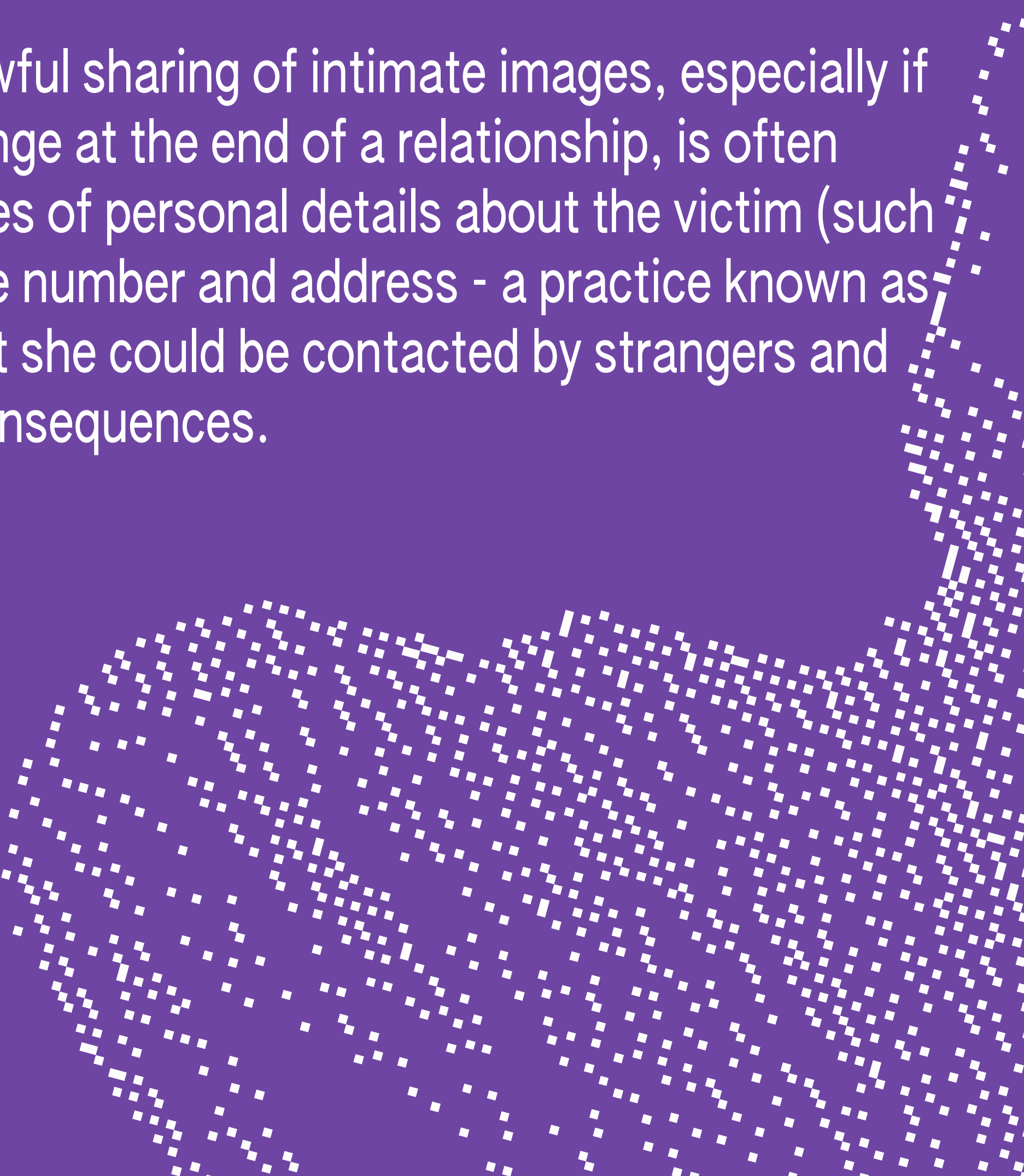
part 2

The unlawful sharing of sexually explicit images or videos is an offence covered by art. 612 ter of the criminal code. It occurs when someone sends intimate pictures or videos to one or more people without the consent of the person represented therein.

The definition of “consent” needs to be contextualised very precisely for this offence: being aware of and agreeing to the production of the photos or videos does not automatically correspond to giving consent to the sharing of these materials, which should remain private.

Consenting to a recording does not mean accepting, or having to expect, that sooner or later it will be shown or sent to other people or uploaded to websites, thus violating personal liberty and the trust placed in the other person.

What’s more, the unlawful sharing of intimate images, especially if done in a spirit of revenge at the end of a relationship, is often accompanied by a series of personal details about the victim (such as her name, telephone number and address - a practice known as doxxing), meaning that she could be contacted by strangers and subjected to further consequences.



unlawful sharing of intimate images in numbers

See the section in Part 1.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE UNLAWFUL SHARING OF INTIMATE IMAGES

When your intimate images are shared without your consent, you might have to face up to complex social, legal as well as emotional and psychological questions that could disturb your life.

Anxiety, anger and shame are generally the dominant feelings accompanying this experience.

Anxiety is often linked to the worry about the consequences of your intimate images being shared: what will my colleagues or my employer think of me? what about my family, my friends and acquaintances?

Anger is often associated with the sense of betrayal linked to whoever shared the images, or in any case the unfairness of feeling intimately violated, but sometimes you may feel angry with yourself, for having trusted someone, and that may give rise to a sense of guilt.

Shame is a consequence of knowing that an intimate, private version of yourself is accessible to people who, given their relationship with you, the context, and respect of roles and boundaries, should never have been able to see it. Your social identity is therefore temporarily put in crisis: you fear that the way other people see you is incompatible with these images, and that this will have a negative impact on how they judge you.

These thoughts and emotions can become invasive, causing social withdrawal, an obsessive control of shared materials and the development of depressive disorders.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNLAWFUL SHARING OF INTIMATE IMAGES

The offence of unlawful sharing of sexually explicit images or videos was introduced in Italy in 2019, with the aim of protecting individual, moral and sexual liberty, as well as psychophysical integrity.

Today, if someone shares intimate images or videos of you without your consent, they are punished in accordance with article 612-ter of the criminal code, unless they have committed a more severe offence: if they threaten to share private materials unless you give them money or perform other services for them, they are committing the offence of extortion (if you pay; otherwise, attempted extortion).

It is still an offence if you send someone intimate selfies that you took yourself and he passes them on to other people without your consent, or if you decide to film a video together but he then sends it to other people without your knowledge or against your will.

Taking and sending intimate photos and videos is absolutely legal and falls within the sphere of individual sexual liberty;

what is not permitted is to transmit sexually explicit content in which you appear to other people without your authorisation.

You are also a victim of this offence if you didn't know you were being filmed during intimate acts with someone, and he then decides to share the material without your knowledge.

If, however, he takes intimate images in a private space without your knowledge but does not share them with anyone, he may have committed the offence of unlawful interference in private life. In contrast, filming or taking photos of parts of your body in a public space or place open to the public, thus disturbing and distressing you, is harassment.

If the intimate material involves minors, this may constitute the offence of child pornography or possession of child pornography.

Anyone who has received your intimate photos or videos and passes them on to other people without your consent is also prosecutable for unlawful sharing, although in this case it's necessary that they acted with the intention of causing you harm.

In general, remember that the shared images or videos don't necessarily need to show sex acts or genital organs: it's enough that they show erogenous zones of the body that evoke sexuality.

The sentence is increased if the offence was committed by your husband, even if you are separated or divorced, or by anyone else with whom you have or had a sentimental relationship, or if it was committed using digital or telematic devices. These circumstances naturally have a greater negative impact, in the first case because the offence was committed by someone you loved and trusted, and in the second because the use of such devices enable the material to be sent to countless people in a very short time.

The sentence is also increased if you are in a situation of physical or psychological inferiority or if you are pregnant.



legal instruments available to the victim

If you think that intimate images or videos depicting you are circulating online, you can report it to the privacy authority here. If you are the victim of unlawful sharing, you can file a complaint within 6 months of the day you became aware of it.

Your complaint can only be withdrawn through due process of the law, to ensure that you have not been pressurised to withdraw it by the offender. If you are in a condition of physical or psychological inferiority, or if you are pregnant, the offence is prosecutable automatically (and hence can be reported by anyone). In the criminal proceedings you can constitute the claimant, to obtain compensation of damages.

You can also exert your “right to be forgotten,” meaning you can ask the platforms to remove intimate images or videos depicting you and uploaded without your consent. The right to be forgotten is regulated by article 17 of the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (Reg. (EU) 679/2016 - the GDPR), which permits you to require the controller of any sensitive data to delete such material immediately.

Specifically, to achieve the removal of intimate images or videos shared without your authorisation:

- you can make a written request to the subject that shared the material depicting you; many

online platforms and search engines (such as Google) have dedicated procedures you can follow to ask for and obtain the removal of such material;

- [Here](#) you can find the form for requesting the removal of your personal data from Google.
- [Here](#) you can access the Take It Down service if your content has been shared on Meta's platforms (Instagram, Facebook). This platform is a tool for the recognition and deletion of sexually explicit content. To use, it, people under the age of 18 can present their case on the site by answering a series of questions and selecting the unlawful content from their own device. The platform safeguards the anonymity of the victim.
- Any images sent on an encrypted platform (such as WhatsApp) cannot be removed using Take It Down.
- you can submit a claim to the privacy authority, by yourself or with the assistance of a lawyer, [through this link](#);
- you can complain to the judicial authority and obtain, as well as an order to remove the sexually explicit content, compensation for damages;
- you can ask for the Postal Police's help in the deletion of videos, the filing of a complaint and the collection of evidence, by filling in [the form on their site](#).

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR COPING WITH THE UNLAWFUL SHARING OF INTIMATE IMAGES

are you a victim of unlawful sharing?

Don't respond to any provocative, offensive or threatening messages sent by the person who is harming or blackmailing you. Don't delete such messages: keep them, because they could be useful in the future as evidence.

Keep a note of the virtual places, dates and times of the messages, as well as their content (for example, by taking a screenshot).

To obtain psychological support, ask for help from the anti-violence centres and family counselling clinics in your area, or from a trusted psychologist or associations like DonneXStrada. Even if you are a minor, you can still ask these organisations for information and help, and/or you can talk to an adult you trust and they will help you understand what to do.

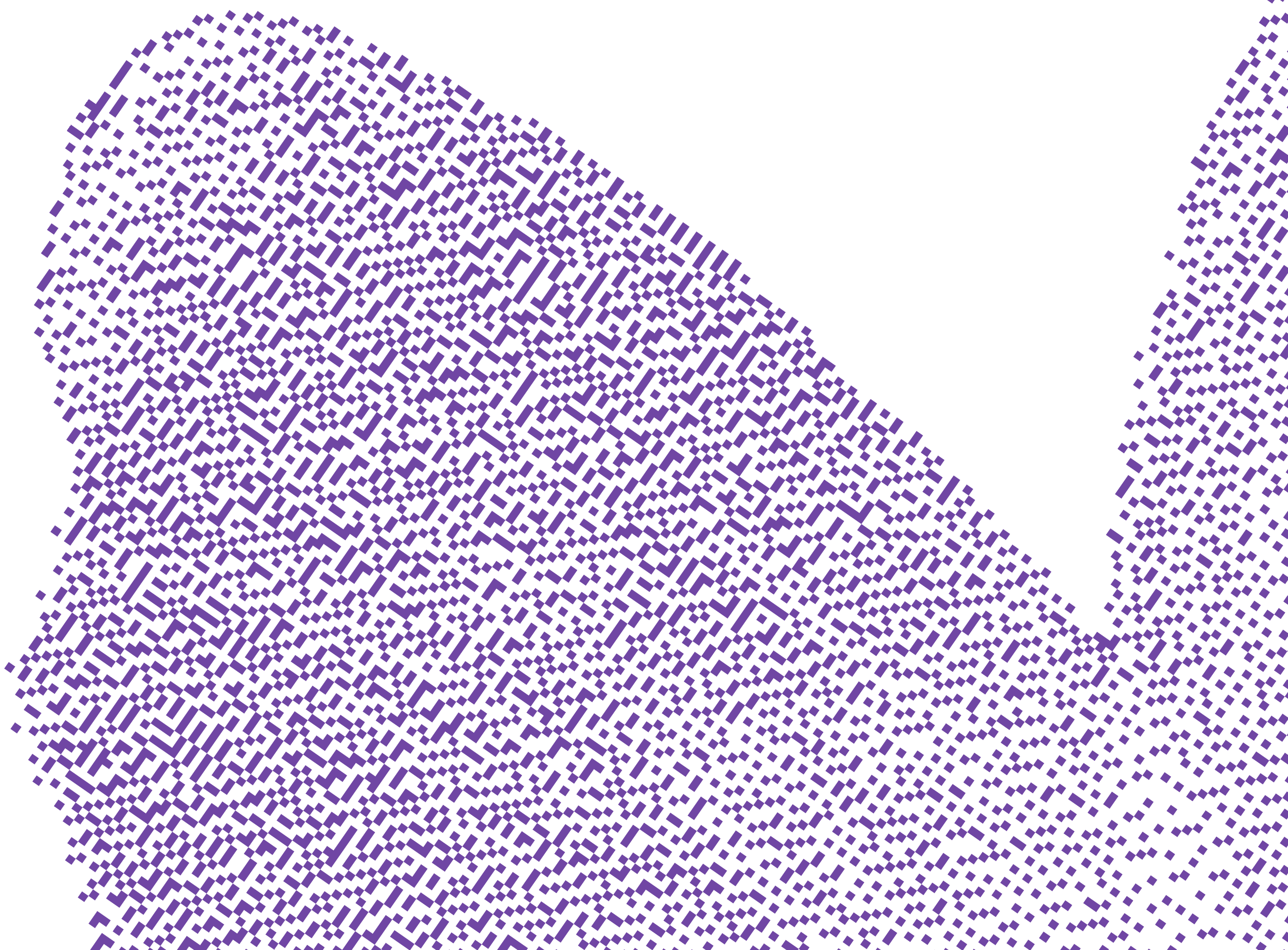


have you seen a case of unlawful sharing or do you know a victim of it?

If, for example, you're in a chat group in which intimate images of a woman (whether she is or is not part of the group) are being shared, don't share them for any reason: instead, consider whether to write in the chat that you are disassociating yourself from this illegal behaviour, or whether to leave the group.

If you know the victim, you might decide to contact her, so she can decide if she wants to file a complaint.

For more supporting information, see the section in [Part 1](#).





part 2

STALKING





part 2

Stalking is a term deriving from the verb “to stalk,” which means to “advance stealthily.” The stalker is a “hunter lying in wait,” a “predator”; the victim is his “prey.”

Under Italian law, stalking is classified as “persecutory acts,” an offence under article 612 bis of the criminal code, which aims to safeguard the psychological and moral liberty of the person. It is a subsidiary offence, meaning that it is only applicable if the event does not constitute a more serious crime.

This article disciplines anyone who repeatedly carries out threats or harassment such as to cause a severe and enduring state of anxiety or fear for oneself or a loved one. It is also an offence if the behaviour causes the victim to change her everyday habits.

It might not be easy to realise that you are being stalked, as the behaviour it entails isn't very different from normal signs of interest or attempts to woo you. However, stalking involves repeated and insistent behaviour, even if your lack of interest is explicit.

This is the reason that you or people close to you may initially play down what's happening.



stalking in numbers

10.3%

The percentage of women who have been stalked by men other than their ex-partner (a total of 2 million, 229 thousand): specifically, by acquaintances (4.2%), strangers (3.8%), schoolfriends or fellow students (1.3%), colleagues or employers (1.1%).⁷⁰

51,713

Number of calls to 1522 in 2023.⁷¹

+59%

The increase in calls to 1522 between 2022 and 2023.⁷²

48%

The percentage increase in persecutory acts from 2013 to 2022.⁷³

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF STALKING

If you are a victim of cyberstalking, you probably feel shaken by the stalker's continual harassment of you: this can cause the hyperactivation of your body's alarm system, as it attempts to detect threatening signals in your physical or digital environment and protect you.

You may feel very distressed and forced to change your route (if you're on foot), job (if he knows where you work), home (if he turns up where you live or is your neighbour), telephone number (if he bombards you with phone calls or messages) or email address (if he plagues you with emails).

The repeated invasion of your everyday life can make you feel overwhelmed, including with recurrent thoughts and emotions.

A common reaction is an obsessive brooding over the stalking, which can temporarily affect your mental equilibrium. Such a psychological reaction is a consequence of the state of alarm in which you are living.

For a full picture of the different clinical reactions, see [the section on the psychological effects of domestic abuse in Part 1.](#)

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF STALKING

Stalking is a habitual offence: the threatening behaviour or harassment must be repeated over time and there must be at least two such occasions.

This may be in a short period of time (for example you might receive repeated messages in just one night). The threats or harassment don't necessarily have to be sent to you: they might be sent to other people, who then pass the messages on to you. This is known as "indirect stalking."



some examples of persecutory behaviour

Examples of persecutory behaviour include:

- being insistently followed or obsessively wooed (sending of letters, roses, gifts or love songs, etc.);
- he may ring your doorbell repeatedly or keep turning up where you work or somewhere else you regularly go;
- you may be persecuted by someone who keeps taking out civil and criminal lawsuits against you, even if unfounded (under Italian law, this is called “stalking giudiziario” - judicial stalking);
- you may be persecuted by a neighbour, who might frequently harass you, scare you, ring your doorbell insistently or leave threatening messages in your letter box or hang around outside your door (known in Italian law as “stalking condominiale” - stalking by a neighbour);
- you may be stalked by someone you previously had a relationship with – in this case, we suggest you read the section on relational stalking in Part 1;
- you may be harassed by your employer, your supervisor or a colleague. In fact, bullying behaviour can also be considered stalking if it provokes fear or

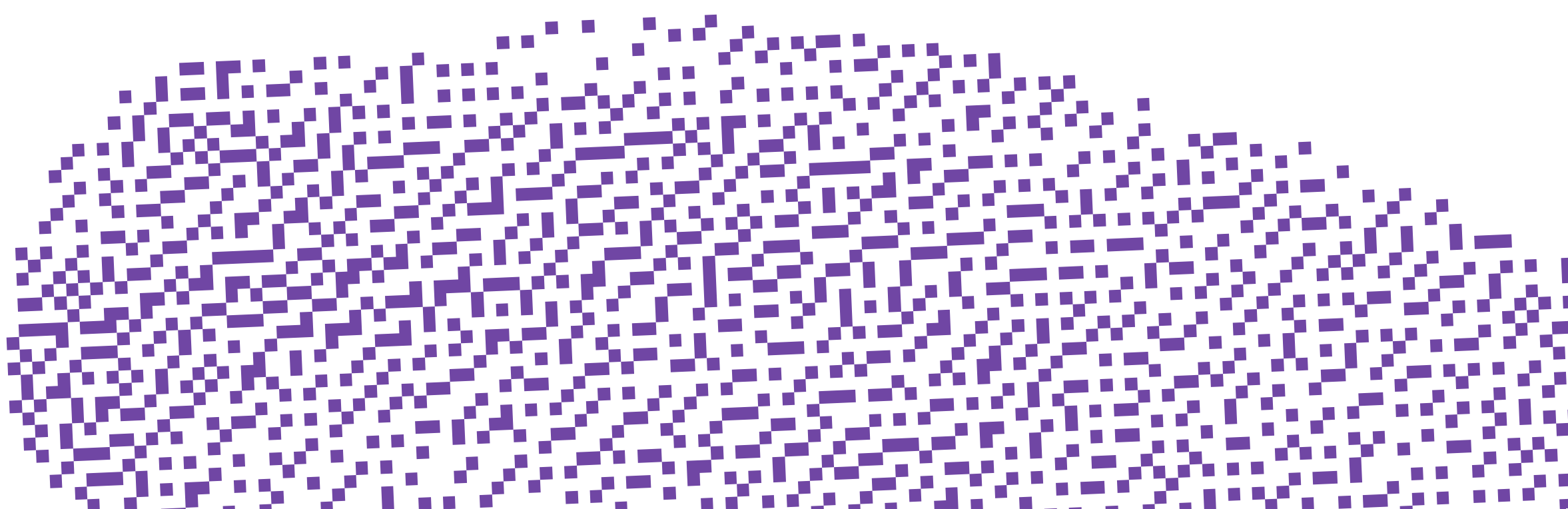
severe anxiety, causes you to change your everyday habits, or provokes a justified fear for your own or someone else's safety (known in Italian law as "stalking occupazionale" - stalking in the workplace).

These events are alternatives, meaning that only one has to occur for it to be an offence. The stalker's motivation isn't important: it's sufficient that he wants to threaten or harass you in the knowledge that he could provoke at least one of the reactions described above.

It doesn't matter if he wants to take revenge for something you said or did, if, he's obsessed by you, or even if you knew each other. It's also not necessary that he intended from the beginning to carry out each episode of harassment: bear in mind that stalkers usually change and intensify their oppressive behaviour.

The offence becomes more serious when it is committed by your husband, even if you are separated or divorced, or by someone with whom you have a sentimental relationship (you can find more information on this in the section on relational stalking in Part 1), or if the victim is a minor, a pregnant woman or a person with a disability, or if the offender is armed or disguised.

It is also aggravated when digital or telematic devices are used to threaten or harass the victim: this is known as cyberstalking. For more information, see the dedicated "insight" box.



legal instruments available to the victim

If you are a victim of stalking you can file a complaint: remember that you have 6 months to do so, not 90 days, because you may need time to process the harassment.

Your complaint can only be withdrawn through due process of the law, to ensure that you have not been pressurised to withdraw it by the offender, and in some cases may be irrevocable, such as when the offence involves repeated threats. In some cases, such as if you are a minor or have a disability, the offence is prosecutable automatically.

If you are being stalked, you can request a restraining order, which is a precautionary measure where the judge orders the offender not to approach the places you habitually go to or to keep a certain distance from such places or from you, and may order the use of control devices such as an electronic tag.

If a stalker under a restraining order breaches these prohibitions and continues to harass you, another measure may be applied, called the “divieto di dimora” (prohibition of stay), which requires the stalker to move to another town or city.

In the criminal proceedings you can constitute the claimant, to obtain compensation of damages. During the criminal proceedings for stalking, your statements are key

to obtaining a conviction, and so they must be credible and reliable (and hence plausible and consistent). But don't worry: you only need to tell the truth, and try to describe all the episodes of harassment - including where and when they took place - and the distress they caused you.

Additional evidence in the proceedings could consist of the testimonies of any eyewitnesses to the harassment, medical certificates in relation to your state of stress, videos demonstrating that you were being followed, or recordings of telephone calls, screenshots of messages, emails or text messages, or photographs of any gifts you received.

If you are a victim of stalking, as an alternative to filing a complaint you may submit a request to the police commissioner for an admonition in relation to the stalker. If the stalker still persists, the offence becomes prosecutable automatically, and if convicted, the judge will apply an increased sentence (see [the section in Part 1 on admonition in the case of maltreatment](#)).

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR COPING WITH STALKING

are you a victim of stalking?

As a response to these actions, the police and carabinieri might advise you to adopt some behaviours that, in reality, restrict your freedom (for example, not to go out alone at night, not to go to certain places, etc.): ultimately, every woman is different, and you should feel free to find the compromise most acceptable to you between your protection and self-restriction of your liberty.

Remember that you should never feel judged or blamed!

So if you are a victim of stalking:

- don't respond to any provocative, offensive or threatening messages, to avoid feeding your stalker's obsession;
- note down the places, dates and times of where you saw him and/or any messages, as well as their contents (e.g. through screenshots). This could provide evidence to help reconstruct and provide a chronology of events when you file a complaint;
- analyse the situation rationally and don't downplay any annoying or inappropriate behaviour displayed by the potential stalker;

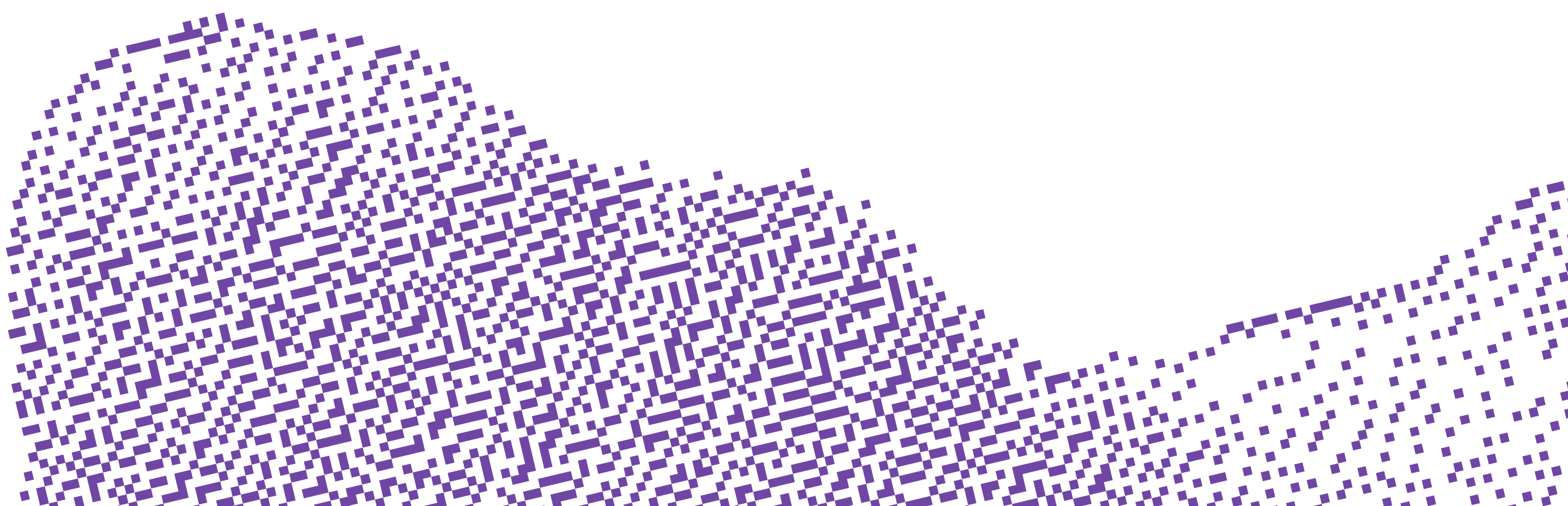
- try to be very clear about your feelings in relation to the stalker. It's very important that you succeed in meeting every proposal with a firm "no" and that you are consistent in refusing an unwanted relationship. Otherwise you risk reinforcing the stalker's belief that he will be able to achieve his goal;
- if you are (also) harassed by phone, you could get a second number or fixed line, and gradually stop using your original number.

See Part 1 for practical advice and contacts.

are you aware of a case of stalking or do you know a victim of it?

If you know someone who is being stalked, ask for help and advice on what to do from anywhere suitable (police, family counselling clinics, school psychologist and teachers, associations like DXS, etc.).

If you have a friend in this situation, talk to her openly about your concerns and ask if she would like you to help and support her. Find out where she can go for support and accompany her if she needs you to.



cyberstalking

Cyberstalking is a combination of the words “cyber,” which recalls the world of technology, and “stalking,” which, as discussed above, means “approaching secretly” or “hunting.” It falls within the category of “cyberviolence” and consists of persecution with harassment and threats using modern digital or telematic technology. It is an aggravating circumstance of persecutory acts.

As in this case there are no spatiotemporal limits, the harassment is even more pervasive and it can be even more difficult to avoid, as it can reach the victim anywhere and everywhere, generating a perpetual hyper-alertness. This situation is further aggravated by the fact that in such cases, the offender often remains anonymous.

According to a survey by Up Research and Norstat, about 1.5 million Italians have been cyberstalked: nationwide, this amounts to 3.4% of respondents, reaching up to 7.1% in young adults aged 18 to 24.⁷⁴

The advent of social media has made this offence ever more widespread: information (including defamatory information) can now be spread to an indeterminate number of people in a very short time with just one click, causing even greater detriment.

Here are a few examples of stalking by digital devices:

- the receipt of multiple harassing or threatening messages (by text or WhatsApp);
- the publication of posts on social networks with detrimental or threatening content;
- the publication of your photos (even if faked) on social networks, resulting in undue interference in your private and relational life;
- the receipt of insistent “likes” on one or more photos you’ve uploaded, or of multiple emails, text messages or instant messages via social media; finding GPS devices or geolocating spyware installed in your car, on your phone or elsewhere in order to track your movements.

In the case of offensive emails or messages, you might also be the victim of aggravated defamation if these messages damage your reputation, whether or not they are sent to you directly. For example, offensive messages might be sent in a chat group you’re not in, but one of the recipients tells you what they say, or they might be published on social media when you’re not online (if you are actually present or online, this constitutes “ingiuria” (insult), which is not a crime but only a civil offence).

In criminal proceedings, you can request the preventive seizure of the website or page (such as a Facebook page) containing the offending defamatory comment even if the owner refuses to take it down spontaneously.

are you a victim of cyberstalking:

- you can call 112 or contact any of the resources listed above. If you can't talk, you can use the app Whereareyou to message an operator and ask for urgent assistance (the app is able to detect your location). You can also access the Postal Police's website and fill in the information request form here:
- you can also call 1522 or seek psychological support from family counselling clinics, associations like DonneXStrada, pharmacies, anti-violence centres, etc.;
- don't respond to any provocative, offensive or threatening messages, to avoid feeding your stalker's obsession, but don't delete them, so you have evidence if you decide to file a complaint;
- keep a note of the virtual places, dates and times of the messages, as well as their content (for example, by taking a screenshot).

In such cases, the police and carabinieri recommended refraining from certain behaviours (such as posting photos of yourself in a bikini, or naked, etc.); this might limit your personal freedom, but ultimately all women are different and you should feel free to find the most acceptable/sustainable compromise between protecting yourself and self-limiting your own liberty, and under no circumstances should you be judged or blamed!

Three tips to protect yourself against cyberstalking (taken from the Postal Police's page on security for website users):

- try not to share (or do so only if you're sure) detailed information about yourself online, such as your address, workplace, telephone number, etc.;
- set your privacy settings to stop strangers from seeing your user profiles on social media;
- report any harassment you experience on social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, etc.) to the owners of these platforms.





APPENDICES



MINI-GLOSSARY (FOUR SUPER- IMPORTANT CONCEPTS)

consent

In writing this guide we paid particular attention to the concept of consent from both a judicial and a psychological perspective, while trying to avoid rhetoric and misconceptions about violence.

Obviously we are well aware of the all-pervasiveness of the rape culture that afflicts modern society: we deemed it necessary to adopt a victim/survivor-based approach, above all to ensure a respectful, non-judgemental attitude towards them. When talking to victims it's essential to use language that makes them feel heard, at ease and "welcomed;" they must, for example, be guided step by step when processing and recounting their experience, including an evaluation of if and when to report it.

rape culture

Rape culture is a cultural framework, widespread in Italy and many other countries worldwide, in which violence is seen as sexy, normal and acceptable, because it's driven by a mainly masculine primordial instinct.

In consequence, sexuality is accepted even when it's expressed in a violent, instinctual, unstoppable manner. Essentially, violent men are justified by others because structurally they represent predators, while women represent their sexual prey.

Rape culture flourishes in a society whose cultural, judicial and political systems are firmly rooted in the patriarchy. The credibility of any woman reporting rape is continually placed in doubt, thus leading to victim-blaming – the insinuation that the victim must somehow have provoked the assault or have knowingly accepted the risk. This victim-blaming also emerges from the practice known as slut-shaming, meaning the stigmatisation of women's sexual behaviours and desires, which are considered as vulgar, inappropriate or provocative when manifested or expressed, or even brazen. Obviously, the same behaviour by men is not judged in the same way.

the patriarchy

When talking about violence against women, it's important to consider, even if only briefly, an important theme, namely the patriarchy.

The patriarchy is the manifestation of the greater power that men have, compared with and to the detriment of women, in institutions, schools, the workplace, and family and social structures. Why do we still have to talk about the patriarchy in 2024? Sadly because it still exists, and combating it and eliminating it would mean challenging the status quo.

Physical, moral and sexual violence and even femicide are the terrible tip of the iceberg; the shocking and publicly deplorable ultimate outcome of the constant patriarchal climate that holds sway over our society.

However, there are more subtle - hidden, normalised - forms of violence, such as ignoring, humiliating, ridiculing and emotionally blackmailing women; telling them they're useless mothers or wives, calling them sexist names, blaming them, impeding their self-determination and, in general, maintaining relationships based

on a hierarchical, controlling model and an imbalance of power. And that's not to mention financial control, morbid jealousy, controlling a woman's smartphone or social profiles, objectification of the female body, sexualisation, passing from locker room "banter" to the sexist comments of friends and colleagues, taking personal photos from Facebook and sharing them in WhatsApp chat groups with a kind of "frat house" mentality. Often, all of this is not recognised as an act of violence.

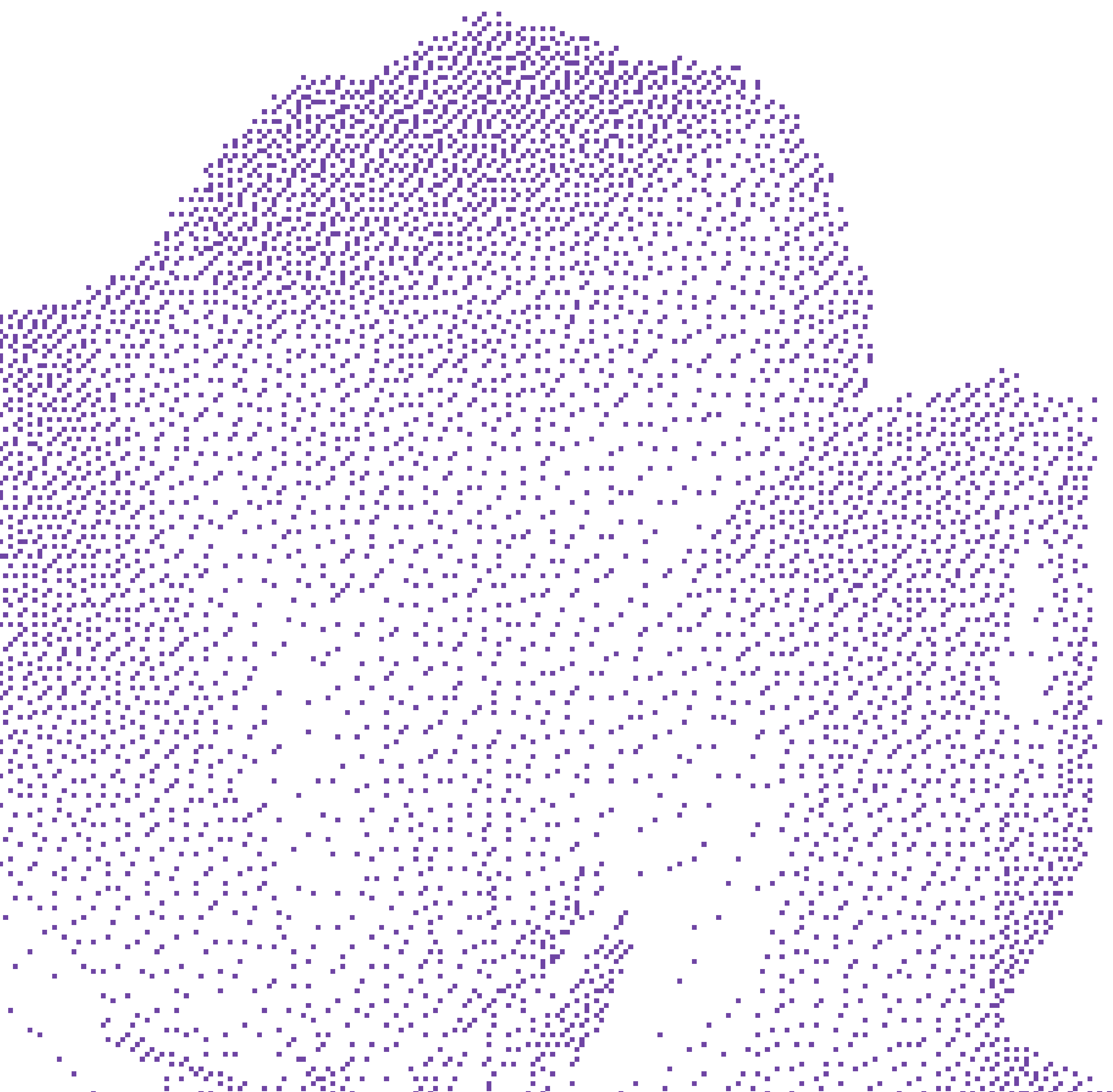
violence

Violence arises from and flourishes in this patriarchal climate of an imbalance of power and repression of feelings: it arises from a culture that, from early childhood, does not permit rage to be expressed in a healthy fashion. The same thing happens for other emotions defined as "negative," such as fear, sadness, and shame, which are never expressed or are experienced alone, as if they were a weakness. In contrast, violence is a behaviour, a choice, an action that is the responsibility of the person committing it, and never the fault of the person suffering it.

Rape has nothing to do with a man's sexual orientation or impulsive desire: it is an act of power and control in which the victim is brutalised and humiliated. The heart of rape culture can thus be expressed with the slogan "Rape is about power, not sex", or similar expressions.

Violence is different from rage, which is an emotion; violence arises from the suppression of rage, the suffocation of human and civil rights and the imbalance of power that, for thousands of years, men have exercised over women. It arises from an educational model that all too often celebrates the sexual audacity or even aggressiveness of boys and men.

We have tried to avoid the false tropes about femicides being caused by a moment of madness (reducing the culpability of the aggressor) or by women who are too provocative or uninhibited, unable to escape from their aggressor/killer in time; on the contrary, using definitions, descriptions, scientific observations and data, we have considered violence in all its forms as a structural, cultural and societal problem.



NOTES

- 1** According to article 3 of the Istanbul Convention, domestic violence means all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.
- 2** Data from Criminal Police - Central Management
- 3** Data from Criminal Police - Central Management
- 4** Data from Ipsos
- 5** Data from Anti-violence Centres - Il Sole 24 Ore
- 6** Data from Actionaid
- 7** Data from World Health Organisation
- 8** Data from European Union
- 9** Data from United Nations
- 10** Data from Istat
- 11** Data from Il Sole 24 ore
- 12** Data from Italian Ministry of Health
- 13** See *Le violenze psicologiche* edited by the Council of the Autonomous Province of Trento in collaboration with the Provincial Commission for Equal Opportunities Between Men and Women and the Association of Psychologists of the Province of Trento, 2022.
- 14** Data from CNR
- 15** Data from CNR
- 16** Data from Italian Ministry of Health
- 17** Data from Ipsos
- 18** Data from Ipsos
- 19** Data from Il Sole 24 ore
- 20** Data from IFOP
- 21** Data from Claudia Goldin
- 22** Data from DeStalk
- 23** Data from Kaspersky
- 24** Data from Kaspersky
- 25** Data from Kaspersky

- 26** [Data from Istat](#)
- 27** [Data from Italian Ministry of the Interior](#)
- 28** [Data from Italian Ministry of the Interior](#)
- 29** [Data from Italian Ministry of the Interior](#)
- 30** [Data from Istat](#)
- 31** [Data from Terres des Hommes](#)
- 32** [Data from Terres des Hommes](#)
- 33** [Data from Italian National Institute of Health](#)
- 34** [Data from Istat](#)
- 35** [Data from Terres des Hommes](#)
- 36** [Data from Il Sole 24 ore](#)
- 37** [Data from Il Sole 24 ore](#)
- 38** [Data from Il Sole 24 ore](#)
- 39** [Data from Save the Children](#)
- 40** [Data from Save the Children](#)
- 41** [Data from Save the Children](#)
- 42** For more information: [State of Mind](#)
- 43** For more information: [Health 2020: a European policy framework and strategy for the 21st century](#), WHO 2020 44
- 44** Battistelli, P., "Autostima," in Bonino, S. (editors), *Dizionario di Psicologia dello Sviluppo*, Einaudi, 1994
- 45** 45 Cooley, C. H., *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902), Cornell University Library, 2009
- 46** [Data from Eurispes](#)
- 47** [Data from Ipsos](#)
- 48** [Data from Istat](#)
- 49** [Data from Istat](#)
- 50** [Data from Ipsos](#)
- 51** [Data from Istat](#)
- 52** [Data from Istat](#)
- 53** [Data from ILO](#)
- 54** [Data from Istat](#)
- 55** [Data from Fondazione Libellula](#)
- 56** [Data from Fondazione Libellula](#)
- 57** [Data from Istat](#)
- 58** [Data from Istat](#)
- 59** [Data from Fondazione Libellula](#)
- 60** [Data from European Commission](#)

- 61** [Data from Istat](#)
- 62** [Prime indicazioni per la prevenzione delle molestie e violenze in occasione di lavoro \(SIPLO\)](#)
- 63** [Data from Istat](#)
- 64** [Data from Italian Ministry of the Interior](#)
- 65** [Data from Italian Ministry of the Interior](#)
- 66** [Data from Italian Ministry of the Interior](#)
- 67** [Data from Italian Ministry of the Interior](#)
- 68** [Data from Italian Ministry of the Interior](#)
- 69** [Data from Italian Ministry of the Interior](#)
- 70** [Data from Istat](#)
- 71** [Data from Istat](#)
- 72** [Data from Istat](#)
- 73** [Data from Italian Ministry of the Interior](#)
- 74** [Data from mUp Research](#)

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ABOUT US

DonneXStrada is a non-profit association established in June 2021, following a social campaign conceived by Laura De Dilectis. Her aim was, and still is, to combat gender-based violence by involving not only the local institutional resources working in this field but also ordinary men and women who aren't directly involved in the anti-violence movement, as they are an important resource in combating violence and harassment in public spaces. ***DonneXStrada***, in fact, is intended to give everyone, male or female, the keys to understand the phenomenon of gender-based violence and practical tools to combat it in their own personal and tangible reality.

DonneXStrada's projects are based on the deep conviction that informed citizens are an essential resource in preventing and combating gender-based violence and harassment in public spaces and, more generally, in the construction of a more equal and aware society.

Above all, awareness is the first step towards prevention. Gender-based violence is a widespread but often hidden phenomenon that can manifest in many forms, including physical, psychological, sexual and financial. Informing people what gender-based violence is and how to spot it enables them to recognise it promptly and activate the emotional skills needed to avoid triggering dangerous destructive dynamics. This is essential to reduce the number of cases and protect those at risk.

In addition, information is a powerful tool to combat gender stereotypes and promote equality. Gender-based violence is often rooted in cultural and societal attitudes that perpetuate inequality between men and women.

Providing education on these themes helps deconstruct prejudice and promote a culture of respect and equality. This is essential not only to prevent violence, but also to build a society in which all people can live free from discrimination and fear.

Another crucial aspect is victim support. Informing the public about the support services available to them, such as anti-violence centres, emergency numbers and legal resources, could make the difference for someone living in an abusive situation. To enable victims to get out of abusive situations and start on the path to recovery and independence, it's essential that they know where to look for help and what rights they have.

What's more, the widespread diffusion of information might encourage the greater involvement of the community in the fight against gender-based violence. The cooperation of the public, institutions, schools, NGOs and law enforcement agencies is essential to create an effective network of protection.

Raising awareness of all these topics could facilitate a collective commitment and shared responsibility towards combating gender-based violence.

Finally, information plays a crucial part in the education of the younger generations. Teaching young people of the importance of mutual respect and gender equality is fundamental for the construction of a violence-free future.

These are the reasons that DonneXStrada decided to write this guide, in collaboration with Enilive.

Through its network of service stations, including 4,000 in Italy, Enilive has a strong presence in the whole country. The collaboration between DonneXStrada and Enilive aims to have this guide reach as broad a public as possible: Enilive's stations are an everyday point of reference for more than a million people, who can make use of the contents of the guide or have an important role in spreading the information it contains.

Victims of gender-based violence may recognise themselves in the descriptions and find the most useful advice on what to do.

Mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and relatives of the victims of gender-based violence can, through this information, discover the most useful ways that they can help, listen to and support the people they care about, such as friends, colleagues and acquaintances.

Harmful behaviour and dangerous attitudes in adolescent relationships can contribute to the normalisation of gender-based violence from a young age, with consequences that often extend to adulthood. The distorted perception of jealousy as a sign of love and the tendency to victim-blame influence the way that young people interpret and manage consent and respect in their relationships.

At an institutional level, there is a need to improve access to clear and timely information on the rights of and support services available to victims of gender-based violence and domestic abuse. A difficulty in finding consistent, comprehensible information may block victims from asking for help and filing a complaint, leaving them isolated and inadequately supported. This situation underlines the importance of a better coordination between the services and a more effective communication, enabling the victim to feel heard and supported in her path to recovery.

