



We ran a short survey to hear from victims and survivors of domestic abuse in Scotland about their experiences during COVID-19. As it can be hard to reach people currently experiencing abuse safely, especially during a pandemic, response rate was quite low. The survivors who did respond have given us really valuable insight into their needs.

### Who responded

- 19** survivors of domestic abuse
- All were female and all but one had children
  - The majority were White British and heterosexual, most were aged between 35-44
  - 6 described themselves as having a disability
  - An ex-partner was the abuser for 15 out of the 19 respondents

### Safety

- On average, survivors rated their safety at **6 out of 10**, with 10 being very safe, but one third rated it below 5.
- The types of safety concerns highlighted included financial insecurity, unwanted contact from the perpetrator and long-term fear and trauma following the abuse.

**“I’m currently trying to separate but he might end up getting most of our money...”**

**“He is being prosecuted, has bail conditions but this is a small town and he can still walk/drive past my house if he wants.”**

**“My ex partner has a history of violence against women, even years after sep[a]rating from his ex partners he committed violent acts against them.”**

- When asked what would make them feel safer, most survivors said stricter legal protections. A couple said being closer to their family or better awareness among professionals.

**“Better laws to protect abuse victims in finance and support.”**

### Most common things survivors need support with at present

- Mental health (11)
- Finances (8)
- Court proceedings (7)
- Children (6)
- Child contact arrangements (6)

**“I’m so tired. My child is still in contact and harmed by their father. I just need space to breathe”**

## Accessing support

- About half (10) the respondents hadn't sought help for domestic abuse since COVID-19 restrictions started, and just under half (7) had.

**“I didn't feel going to the police during lockdown would be appropriate.”**

- The most common ways people had sought help were talking to friends (5), family (4), their Solicitor (4) or calling a Domestic Abuse service directly (4). Several people had spoken to the Police (3) and several had looked online for advice on safety (3).

**“I was told there was no help for family abuse on the occasions I called.”**  
(Survivor of abuse from adult son)

- Most people had accessed a domestic abuse service already at some point (13). However, most people were either not planning on accessing a domestic abuse service for support now (8) or weren't sure (6).
- When asked if there were reasons behind this, most commonly it was shame or embarrassment (5), not being asked about abuse by professionals (4) or the perception that services don't know how to help (4). Some people were unhappy with previous support (3).

**“Lockdown brought up feelings of isolation I felt at the time of the abuse...hearing about how others felt sorry for themselves in isolation made me feel resentful as nobody cared about my isolation during abuse.”**

## Concerns about receiving support during COVID-19

Having to wear a mask to meet a support worker	7
Talking to a support worker wearing a mask	6
Meeting a support worker in a public place	3
Using public transport to get to a meeting	3
Accessing support remotely (on the phone/online)	3
Finding childcare so I can go to a meeting	2
Meeting a support worker in their office	1

## Ending domestic abuse

**“Make them feel valued, they have been living this way for a lot longer than lockdown.”**