

# We say NO to violence against women in all languages

**Take a first step:  
learn, listen, act.**

A guide to recognizing  
gender violence.

Curated by [ItaliaHello ETS](#)



## **We say NO to violence against women in all languages.**

This is a brief guide explaining what violence against women is, how it manifests, and how to seek help.

It is designed primarily for women, but it also aims to engage the entire community because violence against women is a concern that affects everyone, regardless of gender, nationality, or age.

This guide is available in five languages: Italian, English, French, Spanish, and Arabic, and it describes the support services available in the metropolitan area of Florence.

**Take a first step: learn, listen, act.** Here you will find information on how to recognize violence, how to intervene, and how to support those who need help.



## What Is Gender-Based Violence

The term **gender-based violence** refers to abuse or discrimination inflicted on a woman **simply because she is a woman**. It can be **physical**, such as shoving or hitting; **psychological**, such as insults or manipulation; **economic**, when control over finances is removed; or **sexual**, when one's autonomy over their body is violated.

**Violence does not only mean physical abuse; it also includes loss of personal freedom and restrictions on friendships and family relationships.** Violence can cause both **physical** injuries and **mental health issues**, such as depression and anxiety. Violence is a universal problem: it's like a disease that, if left unchecked, can spread.

**Children, including infants, are like sponges:** they absorb everything that happens around them. Even if they don't witness violent episodes, they feel the tension and may develop insecurities or emotional difficulties, learning that violence is normal and that mistreating a woman is acceptable. A violent husband and father causes harm not only to the mother but also to the children.



## If You Need Help, You Can Call 1522

If you are in danger or need help, remember that you are not alone. You can call the **free** number **1522**, which is available **24/7** every day. You'll find someone ready to listen, support you, and provide practical advice to help you understand what to do and what resources are available nearby.

You can also chat with a support worker on the website [www.1522.eu](http://www.1522.eu). The operators at 1522 speak many languages, including English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, Albanian, Russian, Ukrainian, Portuguese, and Polish. **Asking for help is a sign of strength, not shame.**



## Recognizing Violence to Protect Yourself

Recognizing violence is a crucial first step to understanding what you are experiencing, taking control of the situation, and asking for help. Violent relationships usually follow a cycle with three phases that repeat:

- **Tension-Building:** The abuser starts getting angry easily, insulting or criticizing you, or trying to control you. For example, they might dictate what you wear, who you can't talk to, or limit your outings. They might check your phone or control your spending. **If you feel afraid to speak your mind or do things on your own, it means the person is controlling you. This is unacceptable in a healthy relationship.**
- **Violence Explosion:** Anger escalates to violence, which can include harsh insults, shoving, slapping, or threats. **Violence is never justified, even in a relationship.**
- **Honeymoon Phase:** After a violent episode, they might apologize, promise to change, act affectionate, or give gifts. This is only a pause before tension builds again, leading to new episodes of violence. **Violence is not a mistake; it's a choice.**

Initially, these cycles may be spaced out, but over time, they occur more frequently.

It's important to remember that violence **does not diminish. It intensifies.** A violent person will not stop being violent and will not change, unless they decide to seek professional help. Even then, improvements are challenging and require time and commitment.



## Types of Violence

There are different types of violence. Understanding them can help you recognize what's happening.

**Physical Violence:** When someone hits, shoves, pulls your hair, bites, or harms you in any way. In severe cases, this is known as femicide, which is the killing of a woman by a man because she is a woman. **Even if there are no visible bruises**, any contact that causes pain or fear is violence. **It's your body—no one has the right to harm you.**

**Psychological or Emotional Violence:** When someone insults, humiliates, makes you feel worthless, or controls everything you do, including who you meet, what you wear, or how you spend money. **Jealousy is not a sign of love;** it's a form of control. If you constantly feel guilty or if someone tells you that you're never good enough, you are experiencing violence. Psychological violence may not be visible, but it has long-term negative effects on a woman's health and life. **You deserve to be respected.**

**Economic Violence:** When someone prevents you from working, opening a bank account, forces you to ask for money, or controls how you spend every penny, this is economic violence. **You have the right to manage your own money.**

**Sexual Violence:** When someone forces you to have sex against your will, touches you in a way that makes you uncomfortable, or makes unwanted sexual comments, even through calls or messages. It's violence even within a relationship. **No one has the right to force you** into anything against your will, not even your partner.

**Digital Violence:** When someone uses phones, computers, or social media to control, threaten, or intimidate you. They might spy on you online, send offensive messages, post negative comments, or share intimate photos without permission. **Protect your space, even online.**

**Stalking:** When someone monitors, follows, continuously messages you, or appears where you are. If they make you feel anxious or unsafe, this is not normal. **No one has the right to invade your life.**

**Religious or Cultural Violence:** When religion or culture is used to justify abuse or discrimination. Remember that practices like **genital mutilation are forms of violence.**

If you recognize yourself in any of these situations, don't be ashamed to seek help. **The fault lies with the abuser, not the victim.**



## Stereotypes that Hide Violence

Stereotypes are wrong **ideas** or **beliefs** people hold about certain things or people. These false beliefs **can obscure** the reality of **violence**, making it harder for many women to recognize it or ask for help. Here are some of the most dangerous misconceptions:

**1** “Violence only happens in poor families.”

**✗** False: Violence against women knows no social boundaries; it can occur anywhere, in any environment and social class.

**2** “If she doesn’t leave him, it means she likes it.”

**✗** False: Many women stay with a violent partner because he often promises to improve, and they hope he will change. Fear and a lack of support can prevent attempts to break the relationship.

**3** “Even if he’s violent, he’s still a good father or partner.”

**✗** False: Violence against a mother has serious consequences for her children, too. Witnessing or knowing about the violence harms their emotional well-being and sense of safety.

**4** “Violence against women is rare.”

**✗** False: Violence is widespread, but it often remains hidden, unreported, and underestimated.

**5** “Violence doesn’t affect health.”

**✗** False: The World Health Organization considers violence a serious threat to public health, with long-term psychological and physical effects on those who experience it.

**6** “If she’s being hit, she must have done something to deserve it.”

**✗** False: No action or behavior can justify violence. Harming another person is always an unjustifiable choice.

**7** “Violent men have mental health issues.”

**✗** False: Violence is so widespread that it cannot be explained away as an exception or a mental health issue. This belief is a way to avoid seeing violence as a real, widespread problem, one that each of us can witness or help prevent.



## Where to Find Help and Support

If you're in a situation of violence, know that you are not alone.

**Feeling scared and confused is normal**, but there are people ready to help.

**You don't have to face everything alone. Anti-violence centers are safe places** where you'll find professionals ready to support, listen, and help you understand how to face your situation. Here you'll be listened to without judgment or pressure. All services are free. If you live in or near Florence, you can contact these centers:

### Artemisia APS (Firenze)

**Address:** Via del Mezzetta, 1/int., Firenze

**Phone:** 055 601375

**Services:** psychological and legal support, social and employment reintegration, housing support, and care for women and children.

The staff are trained to handle all forms of violence and ensure a respectful, listening environment.

### Centro Aiuto Donna LILITH (Empoli)

**Address:** Via XX Settembre n°17, 50053 Empoli (FI)

Pubbliche Assistenze Riunite di Empoli

**Phone:** 0571 725156 o 335 1019810

**Email:** [centrolilith@anpas.empoli.fi.it](mailto:centrolilith@anpas.empoli.fi.it).

**Services:** psychological and legal counseling, secure and private spaces to ensure your safety and peace of mind.



## Take the First Step Against Violence: Help Those in Need

If you suspect that a woman you know is a victim of violence or stalking, it's normal to feel unsure about how to act, especially if you know both her and the abuser.

It's important to remember that no woman is ever responsible for the violence she experiences.

There are some signs that can help you understand if a woman is a victim of violence. These signs can be psychological, behavioral, or physical.

**Psychological signs:** fear, anxiety, mood changes, sadness, feelings of inadequacy, or guilt.

**Behavioral signs:** distancing from friends, avoiding talking about certain topics, inconsistent stories about bruises or injuries, or anxiety about being away from home.

**Physical signs:** bruises, burns, fractures, or other injuries, changes in body appearance such as weight loss or eating disorders.



## Take the First Step Against Violence: Help Those in Need

The best way to understand what she is experiencing is to **talk with her**, but only if she feels ready. You should approach her in a calm place where she feels safe. **Being there for her** with openness and sensitivity can be vital and make a difference.

**If she's ready to ask for help, you can support her** in finding the assistance she needs to get out of the dangerous situation. Remember, many women feel shame, fear their partner may find out, or worry they won't be believed or might be blamed for their situation. **Listening without judging** and without pushing her to do anything she's not ready for is essential.

Here are some things you can do:

**1 Inform yourself and avoid easy solutions.** If there is immediate danger, call the authorities.

**2 Listen without judging.** Make sure you have the time to listen to her and reassure her that you believe what she's telling you. She may have conflicting emotions, like love and fear, but remind her that violence is never justified and that it's not her fault.

**3 Ask questions to understand better, but without judgment.** Avoid questions like "Why didn't you leave sooner?" Let her tell you what she needs.

**4 Let her know you're there for her.** Abuse often leads to isolation. Your presence and support are crucial.

**5 If there are children involved, help her understand that protecting them does not make her a bad mother.** Violence can deeply harm children as well.

**6 Support her choices.** Reassure her that you're on her side, whatever she decides.

**7 Provide her with the contact information of an anti-violence center.** There she will find listening, support, and information without any pressure.

Remember, it is crucial never to doubt her words.





**Additional  
Useful  
Contacts**

## Violence Helpline

**1522**

(free call, available 24 hours a day)

## Carabinieri

**112**

## Police

**113**

## Emergency Medical Services

**118**



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ItaliaHello assists migrant communities, asylum seekers, and refugees in facing the challenges of social, cultural, and economic inclusion in a new country. It focuses on access to information as a fundamental tool for the autonomy of people with migrant backgrounds. It also develops empowerment and mentorship pathways, socio-cultural inclusion, and employment programs.

[www.italiahello.it](http://www.italiahello.it)