

# Domestic abuse and social security reform

Jo Ozga  
Policy Worker

# Definition

Domestic abuse (as **gender-based abuse**) can be perpetrated by **partners or ex-partners** and can include **physical abuse** (assault and physical attack involving a range of behaviour), **sexual abuse** (acts which degrade and humiliate women and are perpetrated against their will, including rape) and **mental and emotional abuse** (such as threats, verbal abuse, racial abuse, withholding money and other types of controlling behaviour such as isolation from family and friends).

*Scottish Executive 2000*

# Equally Safe

“Our definition is rooted in a gendered analysis of violence against women. This analysis firmly places the different forms of violence against women within the gendered reality of men’s and women’s lives, what it means to be a man and a woman in our society and the status and privileges which are afforded to us depending on whether we are born a man or a woman.”

Scottish Government/COSLA (2016)



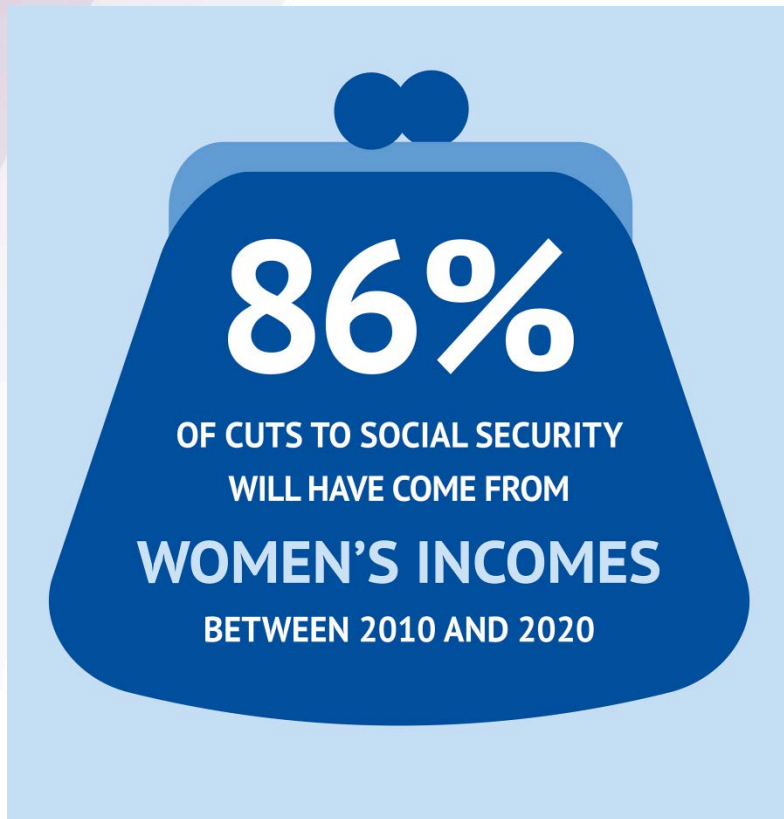
# Reframing domestic abuse: Coercive control

“Coercive control ...is **ongoing** and its perpetrators use various means to **hurt, humiliate, intimidate, exploit, isolate,** and **dominate** their victims. Like hostages, victims of coercive control are frequently **deprived** of money, food, access to communication or transportation, and other survival resources even as they are **cut off** from family, friends, and other supports through the process of “isolation.” But unlike other capture crimes, coercive control is **personalized**...and is **gendered** in that it relies for its impact on women’s vulnerability *as women* due to **sexual inequality.**” (Stark, 2009)

# Social security reform – impact on women

- Women experiencing domestic abuse face considerable barriers when trying to leave an abusive partner.
- Access to financial support and housing are therefore crucial.
- The current reforms to the social security system are further undermining women and children's safety by putting at risk their ability to maintain financial independence, be safely rehoused and rebuild their lives

# Social security reform – impact on women



Welfare reform and the UK Government's wider austerity agenda have had a grossly disproportionate impact on women's access to resources, security and safety.

# WOMEN

ARE TWICE AS  
DEPENDENT ON  
SOCIAL SECURITY  
AS MEN



- Women twice as dependent on social security as men, 20% of women's income comes from the benefits and tax credit system, compared with 10% of men's.
- The gender pay gap in Scotland is 14.8%. Women working part-time earn 33.5% less than men working full-time, and women are 75% of the part-time workforce. On average women earn £175.30 less per week than men.
- Women provide around 70% of unpaid care and 74% of Carer's Allowance claimants are women. Women are twice as likely to give up paid work in order to care.



# 4,000

ANNUAL  
LOSS OF  
INCOME  
FOR WOMEN  
LONE PARENTS  
BY 2020

- 92% of lone parents are women, and women make up 95% of lone parents in receipt of Income Support
- Two-child cap on payments for children affects larger families and disproportionately affects BME women
- Unworkable 'rape clause' for women experiencing domestic abuse
- Conditionality increased – lone parents of 3 & 4 year olds have to be actively seeking work, and attending work focussed interviews when children reach age of a 1 year.



# Universal Credit - Single household payment

“VERY SCARY  
FOR WOMEN AND  
CHILDREN”

“FUNDAMENTALLY UNFAIR  
AND DANGEROUS”

“UNLIKELY TO  
SEE ONE PENNY”

“BEAR THE BRUNT”

RESPONSES FROM WOMEN AT THE 'FAIRER SCOTLAND' CONSULTATION  
WHEN TOLD ABOUT UNIVERSAL CREDIT PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS.

- Income and resources are not shared equally within households
- Removes access to independent income
- Enables and legitimises financial abuse
- Scottish Government has powers to split payments

# Destitution

- Women who have insecure immigration status or from EEA countries are disproportionately affected by destitution and at greater risk of being trapped with an abusive partner
- Women with NRPF are unable to get housing or financial support
- Changes to benefit regulations for EU migrants have had an unequal impact on women, as they fail to take into account gendered patterns of care and employment

# Women's entrapment

- Critical for women to be able to leave an abusive partner is having a safe place to go and knowing that they will have the financial means to survive.

## Current research – SWA/University of Glasgow PhD collaboration

Focus on understanding the role and nature of financial barriers to leaving an abusive partner.

Exploring how women's personal financial situations prior and post leaving are likely to be affected by key social security policies in Scotland and the UK.

# For more information contact:

Jo Ozga

Policy Worker

[Jo.ozga@womensaid.scot](mailto:Jo.ozga@womensaid.scot)

<http://womensaid.scot/>