



WORKING WITH MALE VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

AN OVERVIEW OF INITIATIVES AND INSIGHTS
FROM GERMAN-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Gender disclaimer:

In this brochure, you will find a range of different approaches to gendered terms such as "men" and "boys". These terms are sometimes marked with an asterisk (*), but not always. This variety reflects the linguistic preferences of the projects involved in the publication. Despite these differences, we share a common understanding: We see masculinity as diverse and intersectional. We recognise all individuals who identify as boys or men – regardless of whether they are trans*, intersex*, cis or identify differently. We view gender as a social construct, similar to traits such as nationality, class or race.

In the interest of promoting clear and inclusive language, we find it important to ensure that certain nouns and pronouns speak to all genders. The asterisk appears when it is part of an individual's self-identification (e. g. trans*, inter*). The variety of writing styles in this brochure highlights the beauty of linguistic diversity and illustrates how language is constantly evolving as a human construct that is open to negotiation and new forms of expression.

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FOREWORD

Male victims of domestic violence need counselling and protection. This issue is slowly gaining recognition – but remains overlooked, stigmatised and structurally neglected in many areas. While most existing support structures have traditionally focused on female victims of domestic violence, there is often a lack of appropriate pathways, specialist resources and public recognition for male victims in many regions.

This joint publication was developed as part of an Erasmus+ project entitled "Working with Male Victims of Domestic Violence in German-Speaking Countries". It presents some of the insights gained during two transnational professional exchanges in Liechtenstein (2024) and Luxembourg (2025).^[1] The project aimed to shed light on existing counselling and protection services for male victims of domestic violence while fostering professional exchange and strengthening violence prevention and intervention networks across the German-speaking region.

This brochure presents a contextual overview of the relevant legal frameworks and institutional structures, as well as public perception of the issue in the countries involved in the project. A specific case study has been selected for each country to showcase an innovative or well-established approach to protecting male victims of domestic violence. The content is enriched with ideas and suggestions for improving outreach to boys and men affected by violence, as well as reflections on how to clearly distinguish this work from anti-feminist narratives, as discussed during the professional exchanges. The contents of this brochure are the result of collaborative efforts between numerous professionals working in counselling and other relevant areas, who came together to share their insights from the field. This publication does not aim to be exhaustive; it contributes to an ongoing process by capturing a snapshot of the current situation in 2024/25. This brochure is intended as a working document in the best sense of the word – we want to share knowledge and ideas to lay the foundations for future initiatives.

This brochure was developed in partnership between Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft (LAG) Jungen- und Männerarbeit Sachsen e. V. (Germany), the Männerberatung Salzburg (Austria, formerly Institut für Männergesundheit Salzburg), the Association for Men's Issues (Liechtenstein) and infoMann – actTogether asbl (Luxembourg).

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all professionals, institutions and contributors who helped ensure the success of this project through their openness, expertise and input.

¹ Additional information on other violence prevention projects, as well as documentation from our professional exchanges (in German), can be found online: Liechtenstein <https://padlet.com/BFKM/fachkr-fteaustausch-liechtenstein-2024-2der06s8jxf9old4> | Luxembourg <https://padlet.com/BFKM/fachkr-fteaustausch-luxemburg-2025-qwhpa9pa11tazza1>

DEFINITION OF TERMS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

There is no universally accepted definition of domestic violence. In this brochure, we use a working definition that takes into account various forms of violence based on the definition set out in the Istanbul Convention. Domestic violence includes any acts of physical, psychological, sexualised, social or economic violence within close personal relationships – usually with the aim or effect of controlling or harming the victim or creating a relationship of dependency. This includes violence in (former) intimate relationships, within families and in social circles – regardless of whether those involved live together.

ISTANBUL CONVENTION (COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON PREVENTING AND COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE)

The Istanbul Convention is a human rights treaty that was adopted by the Council of Europe in 2011. It lays down legally binding standards for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Its objective is to comprehensively tackle gender-based violence and to strengthen the rights of those affected. Its structure is based on four pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution and integrated policies. All signatory states are obliged to prevent violence through public awareness, to facilitate effective protection and support mechanisms for victims, and to ensure that offenders are consistently brought to justice. The Convention also requires close cooperation between public institutions to ensure a coherent and effective overall strategy. While the treaty primarily addresses violence specifically directed against women and girls or violence that disproportionately affects them (e. g. domestic violence), Article 2 encourages signatory states to apply its provisions to all victims of domestic violence, including offering shelters and counselling services for men. However, this remains a recommendation and not a legal requirement.^[2]

DIRECTIVE (EU) 2024/1385 ON COMBATING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

On 24 April 2024, the European Parliament adopted a directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence. It requires EU Member States to provide adequate and nationwide access to shelters and counselling services for all individuals affected by domestic violence – regardless of gender. In addition to offering shelters, Member States are also required to create action plans, implement prevention measures, run awareness campaigns, set up national helplines and provide training for competent professionals such as police officers and public prosecutors. These mandatory provisions also apply to male victims of domestic violence. This is made clear by the gender-neutral definition of "victim" in point (c) of Article 2. Further evidence can be found in the directive's scope in Article 1 (2) and in Recital 12. Member States have until 14 June 2027 to transpose the directive into national law.^[3]

² Council of Europe, 2011: "*The Istanbul Convention*": <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

³ The European Parliament and the Council, 2024: "Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence"

GERMANY

Legal framework

Domestic violence is addressed by various institutional structures that uphold the rule of law. One key instrument is the Act on Protection Against Violence (GewSchG), enacted in 2002 ^[4], which enables victims to file for protective orders under civil law. If someone is deemed to pose an immediate threat to another person living in the same household, the police can evict the alleged perpetrator. Courts may also impose restraining orders and prohibit perpetrators from contacting victims and entering their former residence. Other civil law measures include claims for compensation and damages, custody rulings for shared children, and the restriction or suspension of visitation rights.^[5] Many acts of domestic violence – such as physical and sexualised violence and some forms of psychological abuse – are criminal offences (e. g. bodily harm, murder, rape, coercion, stalking) and can be prosecuted under the German Criminal Code (StGB).^[6] Additional protection is provided by other statutory instruments, including the German Code of Criminal Procedure (StPO)^[7], the Child and Youth Welfare Act under the Eighth Book of the German Social Code (SGB VIII)^[8], the Social Compensation Act under the Fourteenth Book of the German Social Code (SGB XIV)^[9] and various victim and witness protection laws. Among other things, this legislation opens up access to psychosocial support during legal proceedings and other free support services. These laws apply to anyone affected by domestic violence – regardless of gender.

Germany ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2017. It entered into force in 2018. While implementation measures have largely focused on violence against women, the Convention allows for broader application to all genders. Germany is also bound by Directive (EU) 2024/1385, which defines victims of domestic violence in gender-neutral terms. In January 2025, the Violence Assistance Act (GewHG)^[10] introduced a legal right to protection and counselling throughout the country – but only for female victims and their children.

Protection and counselling services for male victims of domestic violence

The national support system is generally open to all individuals affected by violence, except in cases where services are aimed at a specific group of victims. Men can contact intervention centres or counselling services specialising in domestic violence. In practice, many of these institutions have evolved from women's support services and were originally designed for female clients, but they are gradually opening up to male victims as well. In some federal states, specialised counselling centres for victims of domestic violence now serve people of all genders. It is still rare to find institutions providing counselling services aimed specifically at male victims of domestic violence. In an attempt to close this gap, five federal states are funding a national helpline called "Violence Against Men", which offers an anonymous first point of contact for male callers. There are also specialised counselling services for male victims of sexualised violence – especially for boys and young men.

4 Act on Protection Against Violence (GewSchG): <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gewschg>

5 Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and Federal Ministry of the Interior: "Mehr Schutz bei häuslicher Gewalt. Information zum Gewaltschutzgesetz."

6 German Criminal Code (StGB): https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_stgb/index.html

7 German Code of Criminal Procedure (StPO): https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_stpo/index.html

8 Child and Youth Welfare Act under the Eighth Book of the German Social Code (SGB VIII): <https://www.sozialgesetzbuch-sgb.de/sgbviii/1.html>

9 Social Compensation Act under the Fourteenth Book of the German Social Code (SGB XIV): https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/sgb_14/BJNR265210019.html

10 Violence Assistance Act (GewHG): <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/gewhg/GewHG.pdf>

There has been an increase in safe housing for men affected by violence. There are currently twelve men's shelters and three gender-inclusive protection projects in five federal states – with enough space for 49 people. Some facilities also offer outpatient counselling, with services including psychological and socio-educational support. Many accommodate fathers together with their children. The Federal Coordination Office for the Protection of Male Victims of Violence (BFKM) supports these services, collects usage data and raises public awareness. Real men talk is a network offering counselling services (in person and online) for boys and men affected by violence. There are also counselling centres where men and fathers can receive psychosocial support in a crisis, including in cases of domestic violence or during a break-up.

Victims of crime can receive general assistance from victim support centres and the local and national counselling structures of Weisser Ring e. V., which offer free support regardless of gender – though male victims are now being targeted more specifically. A national Sexual Abuse Helpline is available for children and adolescents who have been subjected to sexualised violence. In addition, forensic medical institutes and violence protection clinics can document injuries anonymously and in a way that can be used in court – regardless of gender.

Institutional framework and funding structure

The support system incorporates people from a wide range of fields – police officers, judges, social workers and medical professionals – and varies greatly from region to region. Each federal state is responsible for putting violence protection laws into practice. While national laws do exist, it is up to the federal states to implement them and cover the costs.

Most counselling and protection services are provided by civil society organisations – from large charities to smaller associations. There is no regular funding. Instead, funds are drawn from state and local budgets, internal resources, service fees, donations, fines and, in some cases, social welfare benefits (if the victim is entitled to them). This means that funding and staffing levels vary greatly from region to region. Men's shelters only receive permanent public funding in a few federal states – and are still run as short-term pilot projects in most parts of Germany. The same can be said for male-focused counselling centres, which often lack stable institutional support.

The services that are specifically accessible to boys and men are generally connected to local violence protection networks and embedded in regional support structures. National coordination bodies such as the BFKM promote dialogue, raise awareness and advocate for better support structures for male victims in specific federal states and at national level. The Federal Forum for Men (BFM) is the umbrella organisation for national initiatives working with boys, men and fathers.

Extent of male victimisation

Since 2022, the Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany (BKA) has published an annual report on intimate partner violence and intra-family abuse. According to the latest figures, a total of 256,276 cases of domestic violence were reported in 2023. 29.5 % of the victims were male – 75,561 in total, of whom 52,662 were over the age of 21.^[11] And not all cases are necessarily reported – studies show that one in two to one in four men has experienced some form of (mild) intimate partner violence in their lifetime. 11 to 30 % have endured physical violence (even in its milder forms), while 40 to 48 % have been targeted by psychological abuse.^{[12][13][14]} They have suffered from such experiences and expressed difficulties in finding help. In 73 % of cases, they admitted to using violence themselves, blurring the line between victim and abuser. There is also a rise in demand for support services. From 2021 to 2023, the number of enquiries with men's shelters increased by 112.5 % (from 251 to 533). The number of men and children taken in by those facilities rose by 50 %. Despite the higher demand, 133 men had to be turned away in 2023 – twice as many as the year before.^[15] A growing number of people are also contacting the "Violence Against Men" helpline, with 16,130 calls registered to date.^[16]

Public perception and media representation

Domestic violence is still widely regarded as an issue that affects women. Boys and men are often viewed primarily as perpetrators – and many support services approach them with this assumption. As a result, male victims often remain hidden from view and are rarely seen as needing help and protection. At the same time, violence against men is frequently downplayed in public. The vulnerability of boys and men is too rarely acknowledged – on a personal, societal or institutional level. But there has been a gradual shift in the landscape: Men's shelters are now receiving public funding, counselling centres are opening their doors to male victims, the media is increasingly covering the issue, and professional communities are becoming more aware of male victimisation.

Accessibility, barriers and challenges

Many intervention centres proactively reach out to victims after police reports are filed. The very first hurdle may arise during police involvement – if men are not identified as victims of domestic violence. Other victims access support on their own initiative or are referred by family members or agencies within the support network. However, many counselling and intervention centres are not visibly geared towards men (e. g. in their websites, imagery or language), so male victims don't feel addressed. In addition, institutions often distinguish between counselling services for victims and perpetrators – and perpetrator programmes are almost exclusively aimed at boys and men. This makes it harder to perceive males as vulnerable and fails to reflect the more complex reality of overlapping victim and perpetrator roles.

11 Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany, 2024: "Häusliche Gewalt. Bundeslagebild 2023"

12 Jungnitz et al., 2004: "Gewalt gegen Männer. Personale Gewaltwiderfahrnisse von Männern in Deutschland. Pilotstudie im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend"

13 Jud et al., 2023: "Prevalence and predictors of affirmations of intimate partner violence in Germany: a first nationwide study on victimization in women and men"

14 Schemmel, Goede and Müller, 2024: "Gewalt gegen Männer in Partnerschaften. Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Situation in Deutschland"

15 Peters, Gallrein and Göhler, 2024: "Nutzungsstatistik der Männerschutzeinrichtungen in Deutschland 2023"

16 Puchert, Schmuck and Price, 2025: "Wissenschaftliche Begleitung und Evaluation beim Aufbau eines Hilfetelefons und einer Onlineberatung für von Gewalt betroffene Männer. Jahresbericht 2024: Stabile Weiterentwicklung"

Other key barriers include traditional ideas of masculinity, feelings of shame, trivialisation and fear of not being taken seriously – especially in cases of psychological or sexualised violence. Concerns about losing child custody or facing bias from professionals, police or courts also prevent men from seeking help. Men's shelters, the "Violence Against Men" helpline and national campaigns such as "Living Without Violence, Man" (BKFM) are challenging outdated gender stereotypes and raising awareness of male vulnerability to make it easier for male victims to get help.

Despite growing attention, access to protection and support for male victims of violence remains limited and varies widely from region to region. Men's shelters are currently established in only five federal states, and counselling centres aimed specifically at men are equally scarce or even completely lacking – especially in rural areas. There is also a lack of services tailored to the needs of younger victims (e. g. shelters for boys affected directly or indirectly by domestic violence). In many places, the entire violence protection system is understaffed and underfunded, with male-focused counselling and protection services in particular relying on short-term or insufficient funding. This situation is especially challenging in light of the Violence Assistance Act (GewHG) that came into force in February 2025, which grants a legal right to free protection and counselling only to women affected by violence and their children. When the law is implemented in each federal state, it remains to be seen whether the local authorities will go beyond the legal requirement and also include measures intended to protect boys, men and their children from domestic violence.

FURTHER RESOURCES – SUPPORT SERVICES FOR BOYS AND MEN

Violence Against Men helpline:

<https://www.maennerhilfetelefon.de/en>

Living Without Violence, Man

<https://www.ohne-gewalt-leben.de/en>

a campaign run by the Federal Coordination Office for the Protection of Male Victims of Violence (BFGM):

<https://www.maennergewaltschutz.de/en/>

Men's Counselling Network by the Federal Forum for Men (BFM):

<https://maennerberatungsnetz.de/english-summary/>

Real men talk. An opportunity to open up – man to man:

<https://real-men-talk.de>

Sexual Abuse Helpline:

<https://www.hilfe-portal-missbrauch.de/en/home>

"Weisser Ring e. V.":

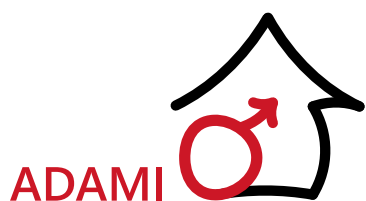
<https://weisser-ring.de>

Victim support in Germany:

<https://beratungsstellen-opferhilfen.de>

GERMANY

ADAMI men's shelter



The ADAMI men's shelter in Augsburg is a project run by SKM Augsburg e. V., the Catholic Association for Social Services in Bavaria (Swabia). It is funded by the Bavarian State Ministry for Family, Labour and Social Affairs (StMAS).

Target groups and access

Our men's shelter is intended for men* who are affected by domestic and/or sexual violence, as well as their children under the age of 12. We offer protection, anonymity and psychosocial support in two apartments housing up to four men* at a time. They can stay here for a maximum of three months. In addition to counselling and referrals, we also provide a certain degree of aftercare. We reach out to those in need through media coverage, Bavarian and national support networks, and our website. Many men* also contact us directly or are referred by family members, friends or other people in their social circles.

Services and counselling approach

ADAMI offers psychosocial one-on-one counselling for men* affected by violence. Our approach focuses on empowerment and building on individual strengths. Our aim is to provide a safe space, promote stability and offer guidance. We provide a secure environment for men* to find peace, process their situation and develop new perspectives. ADAMI offers personal support – from settling in and processing traumatic experiences to planning for the future. Our counselling is culturally sensitive and paced according to each individual's needs. Our approach encourages self-empowerment, builds confidence and lays foundations for a life free from violence.

Cooperation and networks

ADAMI is part of an extensive network of local, Bavarian and national organisations dedicated to domestic violence prevention. We work closely with professionals in various fields, including support centres for men and women, the police, youth welfare services and other assistance providers. The quality of our services is enhanced through professional exchange on individual cases, subject-specific questions and organisational matters. This creates a reliable structure and eases the strain on the support system – with a cross-functional team that provides fast and tailored support to protect men* from violence.

Guiding principles, values and beliefs

ADAMI sees its work as part of the broader mission for gender equality and takes a clear public stance against anti-feminist discourse. Our principles are based on written guidelines and are continuously reviewed and developed within the team. We prioritise collaboration over competition – especially with women's support services – to make gender equality a reality. Our doors are open to all men* – regardless of their background, religion, social status, sexual orientation or experiences of violence. We view our anonymous shelter as a necessary, professional support service for vulnerable men* and their children.

Impact and insights

Our work shows that male victims of violence continue to struggle with deeply rooted gender stereotypes. Masculinity is often associated with strength, control and independence, which makes it difficult for men* to recognise experiences of violence, put it into words or ask for help. Public and professional discourse still tends to cast men in the role of perpetrators. ADAMI reaches out to men* of all ages – and from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds. Violence does not affect just one "type" of man* – it can happen to anyone. This diversity is reflected in the individual needs, challenges and resources of the men* who stay in our shelter.

Transferable approaches and inspiration for others

ADAMI demonstrates that anonymous shelters are a necessary and effective form of support for men* affected by violence and their children. We are particularly successful in assisting men* in moments of acute crisis who need a safe space to recover and reflect. The greater challenge lies in reaching out to those who have not (yet) recognised what they have been through as violence. Our experience highlights the importance of accessible, inclusive services and a clear, respectful stance: Support for men* must be understood as part of the broader mission for gender equality, in cooperation – not in competition – with services geared towards women*. Above all, we need to raise awareness of male victimhood at individual, professional and societal levels.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

More information about ADAMI and selected media coverage:

Project website: ADAMI men's shelter (SKM Augsburg):

<https://www.skm-augsburg.de/hilfe-beratung/straffaelligenhilfe/ad-ami-wohnung-fuer-von-haeuslicher-und-oder-sexualisierter-gewalt-betroffene-maenner>

Video report (ARD Mediathek): "My Wife Beats Me" – SWR Story On demand here:

<https://www.ardmediathek.de/video/swr-story/meine-frau-schlaegt-mich/swr/Y3Jp-ZDovL3N3ci5kZS9hZXgvczlxMjU3MzY> (available until 9 October 2026)

Blog post (Bavaria Against Violence): ADAMI – support for men* affected by violence:

<https://bayern-gegen-gewalt.de/english/>

Press article (Süddeutsche Zeitung): "When men seek protection" – about men's shelters in Bavaria Read the article (subscription required):

<https://www.sueddeutsche.de/bayern/bayern-peter-augsburg-nuernberg-maennerschut-zwohnung-gewalt-stalking-1.5946596?reduced=true>

AUSTRIA

Legal framework

The Austrian Act on Protection Against Violence (1997) established a legal framework to protect victims of domestic violence from further abuse – even if incidents are not actually reported to the police. As part of the key protection measures, the police can remove perpetrators from their family home, courts can issue temporary restraining orders, and violence protection centres have been established in all federal states. The powers granted to the police were extended in 2020; in addition to evicting perpetrators, they can now also impose restraining orders.^[17] Whenever someone is removed from their family home in this way, the police pass on the victim's details to a violence protection centre, which then proactively reaches out to offer further support. Since 2021, those who have been removed from their family home and handed a restraining order have also been included in the intervention process. They are required to attend mandatory violence prevention counselling. Acts of domestic violence are punishable under the Austrian Criminal Code (StGB).^[18] Any such offences may be reported to the police – or may be prosecuted by the state once they become known to the authorities ("offences prosecuted ex officio"). Other statutory instruments available to the Austrian authorities include the Code of Criminal Procedure (StPO), the Code of Civil Procedure (ZPO)^{[19][20]} the Hate on the Internet Act (HiNBG)^[21] and the Media Act (MedienG). Victims of violent or sexual offences, including stalking and ongoing abuse – and children who witness violence in close social settings – are entitled to psychosocial and legal support.^[22] These laws apply to anyone affected by domestic violence – regardless of gender. The Istanbul Convention entered into force in Austria in 2014 – with a focus on gender-based violence and violence against women. Directive (EU) 2024/1385, which defines victims of domestic violence in gender-neutral terms, is yet to be transposed into national law.

Specific support services for male victims of domestic violence

There is only a limited range of protective services aimed specifically at boys and men.^[23] Vienna has a shelter for adult men affected by human trafficking, but there are no such safe spaces for boys and men experiencing domestic violence. There are men's counselling centres in various regions offering a range of services – from crisis support and anti-violence coaching to psychosocial support during legal proceedings – but the focus is not always on victim protection. Not all of these services are free of charge. Some support is also offered over the phone, including the 24/7 "Männerinfo" crisis helpline (+43 800 400 777), which primarily focuses on preventing male violence, and the "Männernotruf" emergency hotline (+43 800 246 247).

17 Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research: "Häusliche Gewalt/Gewalt in der Privatsphäre": <https://www.bmfwf.gv.at/frauen-und-gleichstellung/gewalt-gegen-frauen/gewaltformen/haeusliche-gewalt.html>

18 Austrian Criminal Code (StGB): <https://www.jusline.at/gesetz/stgb>

19 Code of Criminal Procedure (StPO): <https://www.jusline.at/gesetz/stpo>

20 Code of Civil Procedure (ZPO): <https://www.jusline.at/gesetz/zpo>

21 Federal Ministry of Justice: "Hass im Netz": <https://www.bmj.gv.at/themen/Fokusthemen/gewalt-im-netz.html>

22 Federal Ministry of Justice: "Prozessbegleitung":

<https://www.justiz.gv.at/service/opferhilfe-und-prozessbegleitung/prozessbegleitung.2c94848535a081cf0135a49ef4880021.de.html>

23 Austrian Federal Chancellery: "Spezielle Beratungsstellen für Männer bei Gewalt":

https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/de/themen/notfaelle_unfaelle_und_kriminalitaet/gewalt_in_der_familie/4/1

There are also helplines for victims of all genders, such as "Rat auf Draht" (147) and "Opfernotruf" (+43 800 112 112). These do not target boys and men in particular. In addition, child protection centres offer help and counselling for violence against children and adolescents – regardless of gender.

Violence protection centres work closely with the police and justice system in overseeing various types of restraining orders and offer support to those affected by domestic violence – regardless of gender. There are also forensic outpatient clinics where victims of violence can have traces and evidence documented without the need to file a police report.

Institutional framework and funding structure

Most counselling and protection services are managed by civil society groups such as independent associations and religious organisations. Various NGOs in the social sector run violence protection centres and offer specialised men's counselling at regional offices such as "Männerberatung Wien". In practice, these services are run by a mix of full-time trained professionals and volunteers. The Umbrella Organisation for Men's, Boys' and Fathers' Work in Austria (DMÖ) represents national institutions specialising in men's work and participates in political discussions. There is no central, uniform funding structure. The necessary financial resources often stem from project grants, local and state governments, external foundations and private donors. Some services are enshrined in law and funded by the state, including violence protection centres, forensic outpatient clinics, violence prevention counselling, and psychosocial and legal support.

Extent of male victimisation

There is a lack of systematic, comparable and representative data on male victims of domestic violence in Austria. In 2011, a representative survey of 1,042 men aged 16 to 60 found that 72.8 % had experienced psychological violence during childhood, while 73.7 % had been exposed to physical violence and 12 % to sexualised violence.^[24] In intimate relationships, 28.2 % of men reported psychological violence, 18 % physical violence and 1.2 % sexualised violence. Similar experiences of violence were reported in family environments. The police publish annual statistics on criminal offences; however, data based on the relationship between perpetrator and victim is only available for "female victim – male perpetrator", making it impossible to draw conclusions about male victims of domestic violence.^[25] Violence protection centres also provide annual statistics to the National Coordination Office for Violence Against Women. These figures show that the number of male victims remains consistently high, accounting for 16 to 21 % of all victims.^[26] Counselling centres also keep their own statistics, some of which are made available to the public.

24 Kapella et al., 2011: "Gewalt in der Familie und im nahen sozialen Umfeld. Österreichische Gewaltprävalenzstudie zur Gewalt an Frauen und Männern"

25 Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research |

National Coordination Office on Violence against Women, <https://www.coordination-vaw.gv.at>

26 *ibid.*

Public perception and media representation

Male victims of domestic violence are rarely the topic of public and political debates. The discourse primarily centres around women and children (without differentiating between boys and girls). When the words "men" and "violence" are used in conjunction, this tends to refer to violence committed by men against women and girls. The focus remains on male perpetrators. However, there are some local campaigns and social media initiatives to raise awareness of male victims. In 2023, the "Männerinfo" crisis helpline ran a nationwide campaign called "Mann spricht's an!".^[27] However, this focused exclusively on men as perpetrators – not victims – of domestic violence.

Accessibility, barriers and challenges

Violence protection centres proactively contact victims after being notified by the police. Some victims reach out on their own or are referred through their support network. Cooperation with other members of the violence protection network is essential and actively maintained at local level. However, boys and men affected by violence are often prevented from getting help due to entrenched gender stereotypes. The limited visibility of male victims restricts their access to support and protection services. There is no nationwide campaign that explicitly portrays men as victims of domestic violence, and services open to all genders often lack information materials specifically tailored to them. Professionals in law enforcement, public administration and healthcare are not always trained to recognise and respond to male victims, resulting in their experiences being downplayed or completely dismissed. Language barriers pose an additional obstacle. There is also a lack of shelters and safe spaces for boys and men to be referred to after receiving initial counselling on domestic violence. Furthermore, there are no follow-up services designed specifically for female perpetrators required to undergo violence prevention counselling. One great structural challenge lies in short-term project funding, which results in financial insecurity for service providers and sometimes even places the burden of cost on boys and men affected by violence. In order to secure sustainable funding for the necessary services, greater awareness of male victims needs to be raised at national level.

FURTHER RESOURCES – SUPPORT SERVICES FOR BOYS AND MEN

Overview and current information:

https://www.oesterreich.gv.at/de/themen/notfaelle_unfaelle_und_kriminalitaet/gewalt_in_der_familie/4

DMÖ umbrella organisation:

<https://dmoe-info.at/en/news>

Men Via shelter:

<https://men-center.at/englisch/>

"Männerinfo" crisis helpline:

<https://www.maennerinfo.at>

"Männernotruf" emergency hotline:

<https://maennernotruf.at>

"Opfernotruf" victim helpline:

<https://opfer-notruf.at>

"Rat auf Draht":

<https://rataufdraht.at>

²⁷ Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection: "Mann spricht's an: #sagwas und verhindere Gewalt": <https://mannsprichtsan.at>

Männerberatung Wien: support and protection for male victims of violence



Männerberatung Wien offers a range of dedicated services to support and protect male victims of violence. We deal with various forms of abuse – and specifically reach out to boys* and men* of all ages (from 6 to 99).

Target groups and access

Our services are aimed at boys*, male adolescents* and men* affected by physical, sexualised and psychological violence in various contexts such as domestic violence, institutional violence and on-line hate and incitement. We also provide advice and support to individuals who have experienced homophobic violence or violence related to sexual orientation or gender identity (LGBTIQ+).

Many are referred to Männerberatung Wien by child and youth welfare services, victim support organisations (e. g. child protection and violence prevention centres and youth advocacy services), as well as women's organisations (especially in cases involving male minors). Others find their way to us through our online outreach (e. g. website, social media), printed materials and awareness events, as well as through our other departments (family counselling, youth prevention work, LGBTIQ+ counselling, fatherhood services and general men's counselling).

Services and counselling approach

As part of our victim protection services, we mainly provide psychosocial and legal support for boys*, adolescent males* and men* who have experienced violence. They can contact us in person, over the phone or online. Our aim is to provide guidance, stability, support and empowerment – especially during criminal or civil proceedings – and to prevent re-traumatisation over the course of these often externally driven legal processes. Our legal support is voluntary, participatory and tailored to each individual's needs (in terms of pace, frequency, format and duration). We take a personal, gender-sensitive and critical approach – especially when victim and perpetrator roles overlap. Our methods include case management, psychoeducation, coordination with the relevant services and social work – clearly distinguished from psychotherapy. Our legal support is based on recognised quality standards and provided by qualified professionals. We also offer trauma therapy, organise self-help groups and provide guidance on the financial aid available through the Austrian Act on Victims of Crime (VOG), victim compensation agencies, health insurance providers and other sources. Männerberatung Wien has other departments dedicated to general men's counselling, LGBTIQ+ counselling, fatherhood services, youth work, perpetrator counselling and other areas. After contacting those departments, some victims are actively referred to our victim protection programmes. This makes our services more accessible to everyone – even if they do not initially reach out to us as victims.

Cooperation and networks

Männerberatung Wien maintains close ties to a wide range of governmental and civil society organisations through ongoing collaborations in various areas. These include the police, courts, child and youth welfare services, education providers, violence protection centres, women's shelters and other women's counselling centres. Männerberatung Wien is a member of the Vienna Network Against Sexualised Violence Towards Girls, Boys and Adolescents (a group of 20 partner organisations)^[28]. We are also involved in regional networks of institutions offering legal support to children and adolescents in Vienna. When adult men are involved in cases of domestic violence, we cooperate with autonomous women's shelters and violence protection centres. Further cooperation is promoted through the "Violence Jour Fixe" network in the city of Vienna, which may also explore the need for men's shelters in the future.

Guiding principles, values and beliefs

As a non-profit organisation, Männerberatung Wien is not affiliated with any political parties or religious groups. Our organisation and people are committed to advancing gender justice by examining gender-specific privileges, disadvantages and inequalities. In a patriarchal society, it is both possible and necessary to critically reflect on structural male privileges while also acknowledging and addressing the disadvantages faced by men – including their experiences of violence. We see ourselves as advocates on three different levels:

- 🕒 We lend a voice to the vulnerabilities, concerns and strengths of boys, men and fathers – including those previously unheard.
- 🕒 We support and cooperate with women – standing up for their rights, causes and organisations.
- 🕒 We are active members of an alliance that promotes gender diversity and social justice.

Impact and insights

Männerberatung Wien has stepped up its victim support initiatives over the past 20 years, helping to close critical gaps and making its services more accessible. We have been particularly successful in reaching target groups through psychosocial and legal support. Thanks to our specifically designed, sustainably funded programmes and strong cooperation and networking structures, we have also been able to reach more marginalised and discriminated groups. Männerberatung Wien believes that male victims of domestic violence continue to be marginalised in Austria.

28 Wiener Netzwerk gegen sexuelle Gewalt an Mädchen, Buben und Jugendlichen, <https://wienernetzwerk.at>

Transferable approaches and inspiration for others

Our psychosocial and legal support has proven particularly effective – thanks to sustainable funding and our involvement in local, regional and national networks. This is the form of support most frequently used by male victims of all ages. In cases of violence commonly associated with shame (e. g. domestic and sexualised violence), it is often helpful to start with a different topic in an online chat or during an initial consultation at the counselling centre. This gives people the time they need to open up about their experiences.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

Website:

<https://maenner.at>

Instagram:

https://instagram.com/maennerberatung_wien

facebook:

<https://facebook.com/Maennerberatung.Wien>

youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/MaennerberatungWien>

LIECHTENSTEIN

Legal framework

In Liechtenstein, domestic violence is not a criminal offence in its own right; such acts are covered by various provisions of the Criminal Code (StGB), including coercion, threats, bodily harm and stalking.^[29] A dedicated law to protect people from domestic violence has been in place since 1 February 2001.^[30] In cases of immediate danger, the police can remove individuals from their family home or ban them from entering. In addition, courts can impose protective measures like restraining orders or restrictions on contact. Another key legal basis is the Victim Assistance Act (OHG).^[31]

Liechtenstein signed the Istanbul Convention on 10 November 2016 and ratified it on 17 June 2021. A national coordination body has been established.^[32] However, most of its measures and campaigns have focused almost exclusively on protecting women – male victims are yet to be systematically included in the support structure. Directive (EU) 2024/1385, which defines victims of domestic violence in gender-neutral terms, is yet to be transposed into national law.

Protection and counselling services for male victims of domestic violence

Since 2013, the Association for Men's Issues (VfM) has been running an emergency shelter for men and fathers with children. It is known as the "Family and Fathers' House" (FVH). The facility includes two men's rooms and a children's room. Support is provided primarily by volunteers and complemented by social and legal counselling, as well as referrals to other agencies. Those in need of shelter pay a contribution towards accommodation costs based on income, with financial support available from the association if needed.

Other points of contact include the Victim Support Office (open to all genders) and the Forensic Nursing department at the national hospital, where injuries caused by violence can be medically documented. There is currently no low-threshold helpline specifically dedicated to male victims.

Institutional framework and funding structure

While violence protection falls within the government's remit in Liechtenstein, much of the work is carried out by civil society organisations. Support services for male victims are not yet widely institutionalised or embedded in public systems. The FVH has received a small amount of state funding since 2022, but most of its financial resources stem from donations, contributions and self-funding.

29 Criminal Code (StGB) : <https://www.gesetze.li/konso/1988.037>

30 Equal Opportunities Department, Office of Social Services
"Gewaltschutzrecht. Das neue Recht zum Schutz vor Gewalt in der konkreten Umsetzung"

31 National Administration of the Principality of Liechtenstein, 2023, "Warum Opferhilfe?"
<https://www.llv.li/en/individuals/emergency-and-disaster/support-for-people-affected-by-crime/why-victim-aid->

32 Office of Social Services: "Jahresbericht 2023/2024 der Koordinierungsgruppe zur Umsetzung der Istanbul-Konvention:"
<https://www.llv.li/serviceportal2/amtstellen/amt-fuer-soziale-dienste/zweiter-jahresbericht-der-koordinierungsgruppe-istanbul-konv.pdf>

Although the Victim Support Office is administratively assigned to the Office of Justice, it operates independently. There are separate structures for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. However, there is still no dedicated counselling and protection structure for boys and men equivalent to those available in the women's support system. The Association for Men's Issues works closely with key public institutions such as the police's Threat Management Unit, the Victim Support Office and various NGOs.

Extent of male victimisation

There is still no systematic, gender-specific reporting on how males are affected by domestic violence in Liechtenstein. However, statistical documentation has improved since the country ratified the Istanbul Convention. In 2022, the Liechtenstein National Police recorded 164 reports of domestic violence; 41 resulted in formal charges. The police registered 39 women and 11 men as "victims/parties involved"^{[33][34]}, but the actual number of men affected by domestic violence is assumed to be significantly higher – especially in cases involving psychological abuse or when incidents go unreported.

Domestic violence continues to be a recurring issue in the counselling work of the Association for Men's Issues. The need for protection and support is clear: Between 2013 and the end of 2024, 27 men found shelter at the Family and Fathers' House, and 34 additional requests were resolved through alternative arrangements.^[35] However, many men still hesitate to ask for help, often failing to recognise what they have experienced as violence or downplaying events.

Public perception and media representation

Male victims of domestic violence are underrepresented in public discourse. There have been no large-scale campaigns or targeted initiatives to raise awareness of male victimisation among professional communities or the wider public. Instead, most campaigns have focused solely on violence against women. This has helped reinforce the public's misconception that men are always perpetrators and women are always victims. Breaking down this stereotype must become a priority for policymakers and all those working in the field of violence prevention. The Association for Men's Issues is committed to reshaping this narrative within the scope of its available resources.

³³ Office of Statistics: "Häusliche Gewalt Opfer/Beteiligte" <https://www.statistikportal.li/de/uebergreifendes-indikatoren/gleichstellungsindikatoren/gleichstellungsindikatoren/2023/01/v-1/i17527>

³⁴ The term "parties involved" is used in verbal conflicts – and cases without formal charges – where no clear distinction can be made between victim and perpetrator, cf. *ibid*

³⁵ Association for Men's Issues Liechtenstein, 2025: "Jahresbericht Männerfragen 2024"

Accessibility, barriers and challenges

Men affected by domestic violence face structural, societal and psychological barriers. Traditional masculine ideals, like always being strong and in control, make it hard for men to admit that they are suffering and ask for help. There is also limited trust in public institutions. According to the Association for Men's Issues, men often downplay their experiences or do not recognise them as violence. Very few men press charges – often because they feel ashamed, don't trust the system or fear it will affect their custody or visitation rights. Furthermore, protective measures such as restraining orders are usually only applied in cases of physical violence, while psychological abuse is often ignored. Existing services need to be further developed and structurally anchored to reach boys and men more effectively. The current infrastructure is incomplete. There is a lack of protection and counselling services specifically aimed at men and male adolescents, as well as gender-neutral protection facilities for all victims. A national violence helpline is currently under review as part of Liechtenstein's efforts under the Istanbul Convention – but it remains to be seen whether boys and men will be explicitly considered in its design. In light of Directive (EU) 2024/1385, which defines victims of domestic violence in gender-neutral terms, including male victims in the future expansion and funding of protection and counselling services will be a critical challenge. Prevention, early intervention and public awareness are key to ensuring effective protection for boys and men.

FURTHER RESOURCES – SUPPORT SERVICES FOR BOYS AND MEN:

Association for Men's Issues:

<https://www.maennerfragen.li/en/>

Victim Support:

<https://opferhilfe.li/en/>

including an information sheet (in German) on "Being a Man – Being a Victim"

<https://opferhilfe.li/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Infoblatt-MannseinOpfersein.pdf>

Office of Social Services:

<https://www.llv.li/en/national-administration/office-of-social-services>

Emergency contacts:

https://www.infra.li/application/files/3216/0698/8342/Notfallkarte_Englisch_web.pdf

Association for Men's Issues



**MÄNNER
FRAGEN**

The Association for Men's Issues in Liechtenstein offers two key services: an Office for Men's Issues and a Family and Fathers' House. The Office for Men's Issues provides information and advice on men's health, fatherhood, separation, violence and gender equality. The Family and Fathers' House offers practical support with everyday challenges and housing – especially for men in times of crisis. Both services are available throughout the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Target groups and access

Our services are aimed at boys, men, fathers and members of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as their families, partners and others affected by violence. The Office for Men's Issues connects with these groups through personal counselling, referrals from public authorities and active digital outreach (social media, newsletter and website). We also raise awareness of our services at events such as LIGA, the largest public fair in Liechtenstein. While we focus on male experiences, our doors are open to people of all genders.

Services and counselling approach

The Office for Men's Issues offers counselling for individuals and couples, legal and social guidance, mediation, case management and empowerment programmes. Our approach is welcoming, flexible and culturally sensitive. Our counselling sessions take place at the office or in more informal settings (e. g. on a walk) and are guided by the association's code of conduct. We focus especially on supporting men, families and couples dealing with fatherhood, separation and other difficult transitions.

The Family and Fathers' House provides temporary accommodation (apartments or guest rooms) – especially for men who have to move out of their family home due to domestic violence or separation. Our facility works closely with the Office for Men's Issues to offer violence counselling and support in overcoming everyday challenges and dealing with public authorities – even for those not staying in our accommodation. Fees are based on what each person can reasonably afford.

Cooperation and networks

The Association for Men's Issues cooperates with various national institutions, including the Office of Social Services, the police, youth welfare services, *infra*, the Association for Mediation, *gewaltig.li* and the Human Rights Association. We are actively involved in the Custody Working Group (AG Obsorge) and the national parental leave initiative. We are also a member of *männer.ch* and the Swiss Men's Network (Männer Netzwerk Schweiz). Furthermore, we are collaborating on Erasmus+ projects to build international bridges around men's health and violence prevention.

Guiding principles, values and beliefs

The Association for Men's Issues advocates for gender equality, diversity and non-violence – and takes a clear stand against anti-feminist narratives. While focusing on male experiences, we take an open and inclusive approach towards all genders. These principles are set out in our articles of association. We also uphold ethical standards in our counselling through our code of conduct, which ensures respect for human dignity, confidentiality, neutrality, fairness and other fundamental principles. We take a systematic and inclusive approach – with a focus on finding effective solutions. We regularly reflect on our work and continue to develop our code of conduct in collaboration with other professional institutions.

Impact and insights

More and more people are reaching out to both the Office for Men's Issues and the Family and Fathers' House. Some of the most frequent topics discussed in our counselling sessions are separation and divorce, child support and custody rights. Other concerns involve residence and employment law, as well as domestic violence. We are also noticing an increased demand for couples counselling. While we have been particularly successful in reaching men from Liechtenstein, our services are yet to completely resonate with men from migrant backgrounds and members of the LGBTQ+ community. A structured survey confirmed that our counselling is seen as helpful and professional – with clients especially valuing our fast guidance, respectful interactions and the empowering effect of our conversations. We have published a set of digital guides to provide quick access to information and support on relevant men's issues. The content is specifically related to Liechtenstein and now also available in English, allowing us to reach a wider audience. The Family and Fathers' House also provides valuable accommodation and day-to-day assistance – especially in times of crisis. One major challenge is funding. While we do have an agreement in place, our current resources are not enough to meet rising demand and sustain our long-term projects. Without additional financial support, especially for ongoing project work, we will only be able to develop our services to a limited extent.

Transferable approaches and inspiration for others

The Association for Men's Issues provides a practical example of how services can be designed for men without losing sight of gender equality, diversity or other groups. Anyone who uses the facilities will find professional, everyday support – tailored to all kinds of personal circumstances, backgrounds and perspectives. Others will learn the importance of raising awareness of men's issues while respecting diversity in gender, origin, age, sexual orientation and lifestyle choices – without oversimplifying the issue or excluding certain groups of the population. One reason our support model works so well is the wide range of topics covered by our association. Many men reach out to us for help with issues like fatherhood, separation, mental stress or general life crises. We often find that experiences of violence only come to light over the course of our conversations. We can then quickly refer the individual to the Family and Fathers' House if needed. This helps break down barriers and improve access to our services. Another example is the association's compact digital guides, which provide accessible information on topics such as separation, fatherhood, men's health and violence. They are aimed at men, women, non-binary individuals, couples and professionals – and are read by a large number of people. This highlights that access to good information is often the first step towards seeking support. Our close cooperation with national institutions and international partners (e. g. through Erasmus+) prove that building connections is more effective than setting up separate structures.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

Website:

<https://www.maennerfragen.li/en/>

Instagram:

<https://instagram.com/maennerfragen.li>

facebook:

<https://facebook.com/mannerfragen>

LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/m%C3%A4nnerfragen/>

Digital guide:

<https://www.maennerfragen.li/en/offerings/e-guide/tblid/79>

LUXEMBURG

Legal framework

When the Domestic Exclusion Act was introduced in 2003 and subsequently revised in 2018, Luxembourg effectively established a comprehensive legal framework to protect anyone affected by domestic violence – regardless of gender.^[36] This law empowers the police to remove suspected perpetrators from shared homes and to issue restraining orders or bans on entering the home. When such orders are issued, the police are required to pass on the victim's details to the Support Service for Victims of Domestic Violence (SAVVD), which then proactively reaches out to offer assistance. As part of this process, male victims were still supported by the Counselling Service for Female Victims of Domestic Violence (FED) until the end of 2024. However, infoMann took over this responsibility in December 2024. Cases involving children are referred to specialised child counselling services. Perpetrators are legally required to attend intervention programmes.^[37]

Domestic violence is covered under various provisions of Luxembourg's Criminal Code (Code pénal), including physical, sexual and psychological abuse, assault, threats, rape, stalking and murder.^[38] The country's divorce and custody law was reformed in 2018 to include the principle of joint custody.^[39] Victims of domestic violence without secure residence status can apply for independent residency rights under the Act of 29 August 2008, last amended in 2023. This ensures that residency is not dependent on remaining in an abusive relationship and prevents deportation. Luxembourg ratified the Istanbul Convention in 2018. It applies to all genders in cases of domestic violence. The implementation of Directive (EU) 2024/1385 is currently under review.

Specific support services for male victims of domestic violence

infoMann is the central point of contact for men affected by domestic violence. As of December 2024, infoMann is also responsible for providing SAVVD services for male victims following domestic exclusion orders. It runs three shelters with a total of 13 rooms in Luxembourg City – including options for fathers with children. infoMann also offers psychosocial counselling for all adult men – regardless of whether they have experienced violence – as well as prevention programmes for boys and young men up to the age of 27.

The domestic violence hotline (Tel. +352 2060 1060) is open daily from 12 pm to 8 pm and is available to anyone affected by domestic violence. Fondation Pro Familia runs a counselling centre called "ALTERNATIVES". The services are aimed at young people up to the age of 27 and their families affected by domestic violence – regardless of gender. The UMEDO project documents physical and sexualised violence for individuals of all genders. The forensic evidence can be used in legal proceedings.

³⁶ Loi du 8 septembre 2003 sur la violence domestique: <https://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/2003/09/08/n1/jo>

³⁷ Ministry for Gender Equality and Diversity: "Violence.lu": <https://violence.lu/en/home/>

³⁸ Code pénal: <https://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/code/penal/20240308>

³⁹ Loi du 27 juin 2018 instituant le juge aux affaires familiales, portant réforme du divorce et de l'autorité parentale et portant modification: <https://legilux.public.lu/eli/etat/leg/loi/2018/06/27/a589/jo>

Institutional framework and funding structure

All support services are centrally coordinated by the Ministry for Gender Equality and Diversity (MEGA). infoMann was established in 2012 at the initiative of the Minister for Gender Equality and has been fully funded by the state ever since. The shelters also receive government funding. Those in need of shelter pay a contribution towards accommodation costs based on income.

Extent of male victimisation

MEGA is currently coordinating efforts to monitor male experiences of domestic violence throughout the country within the Gender Equality Observatory (Observatoire de l'Égalité entre les Genres). The relevant data is collected in cooperation with the police, as well as the counselling and support services involved in the project. This includes information gathered under the amended Domestic Violence Act of 8 September 2003 by the police, the public prosecutor's office, and support and intervention services for victims and perpetrators. Additional information is contributed by other social organisations involved in supporting those affected by domestic violence. This helps to paint a fuller picture of the phenomenon of domestic violence in Luxembourg.

However, the figures should be interpreted with care, as duplicate entries cannot be ruled out at present. In 2023, a total of 1,575 male victims of domestic violence were recorded: 820 minors, 713 men over the age of 18, and 42 men over 65. According to police crime statistics, 797 male victims were registered in the same year: 233 minors, 533 men over the age of 18, and 31 men over 64. In 2023, counselling and support services reported 785 male victims of domestic violence, including 439 minors. infoMann registered 990 counselling sessions that year, including 143 with new clients.

Public perception and media representation

Since infoMann was established and laws were reformed, men have become more visible and institutionally recognised as victims of domestic violence. infoMann is effectively raising public awareness by liaising with the press, running social media campaigns and organising a range of events (e. g. on International Men's Day). There are now more stories and media reports that recognise men as victims. However, deep-rooted stereotypes about masculinity continue to downplay or completely ignore male experiences of domestic violence. These perceptions have a direct impact on those working in support services, so efforts still need to be made to raise awareness in society.

Accessibility, barriers and challenges

Since 2024, victims have been able to access support services through the police, by reaching out themselves or through third-party referrals. The variety of languages spoken in Luxembourg (LU, DE, FR, EN) presents a significant challenge. The SAVVD project has improved referral mechanisms, but it has also revealed new structural obstacles. As more men come forward, the system is under growing pressure – especially in terms of shelter space and custody proceedings. Fathers with children often face legal hurdles in asserting their custody or visitation rights, with courts sometimes influenced by gender stereotypes. Furthermore, the Domestic Exclusion Act is not consistently enforced in all cases, resulting in confusion and uncertainty. The gap between legal provisions and their practical application continues to pose a major challenge.

FURTHER RESOURCES – SUPPORT SERVICES FOR BOYS AND MEN:

Helpline:

<https://violence.lu/en/home/>

"InfoMann":

<https://acttogether.lu/infomann>

ALTERNATIVES – counselling centre for children and adolescents affected by domestic violence:

<https://www.profamilia.lu/Enfants+Adolescents/ALTERNATIVES+-+Centre+de+consultation+pour+enfants+et+adolescents+victimes+de+violence.html>

"UMEDO":

<https://umedo.lu/en>

infoMann – actTogether asbl



infoMann is an initiative run by the non-profit organisation actTogether asbl. We offer psychosocial and legal support for male victims of domestic violence in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, in particular through our support service (SAVVD infoMann) and temporary accommodation for men and fathers. Another key part of our mission is working with boys and young men on prevention and education, covering topics such as violence prevention, media literacy, sex education and awareness. We also provide training for education professionals. infoMann is commissioned and funded by the Ministry for Gender Equality and Diversity.

Target groups and access

infoMann's counselling and protection services are aimed at all adults who identify as male – regardless of origin, status or the nature of their concerns. Our approach to counselling and prevention is built on awareness campaigns, networking and inclusive, non-discriminatory communication. infoMann's services can be accessed in two ways: Men can reach out to us directly by phone, email or social media, or the police will sometimes pass on the contact details of men identified as victims of domestic violence, so that we can get in touch to offer support. We also connect with boys and young men through group prevention workshops, info stands and collaborative initiatives with our network partners.

Services and counselling approach

infoMann offers personalised counselling on psychological, social and legal matters. Our trained professionals understand the complexities of domestic violence. All interventions are based on scientific methods, including systemic counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy and motivational interviewing. We provide psychosocial support, which is not the same as psychotherapy. Every man who comes to us is met with compassion, respect and confidentiality. The process begins with a joint assessment of the individual's current situation, including social aspects such as employment, housing, finances and relationships. Our goal is to provide guidance and practical support (e. g. administrative assistance in dealing with public authorities or finding the right support services). Our counselling also creates a platform to address outdated gender stereotypes, such as the idea that men should handle everything alone, giving them the space they need to heal and recognise their experiences of violence. Our three shelters offer protection from immediate violence, providing a safe space for men and their children to find peace. Together with psychosocial support, this creates an opportunity to reflect and develop perspectives for a life free from violence.

Cooperation and networks

infoMann is part of the Violence Committee, where various governmental and non-profit organisations join forces to combat domestic violence. Its members include the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Family Affairs, the Grand Ducal Police, the Public Prosecutor's Office, women's shelters, victim support services and other specialised organisations. This network provides the platform we need to coordinate our efforts, report challenges and issues encountered in our work (e. g. difficulties in securing housing after leaving a shelter) and improve victim protection mechanisms.

Guiding principles, values and beliefs

infoMann was created as part of an initiative run by the Ministry for Gender Equality and Diversity. We are guided by the principle that all violence is unacceptable – regardless of the gender of the person affected. We firmly believe that protecting male victims is essential to achieving equal rights and sustainably preventing all forms of violence. We adopt a feminist perspective, recognising that systemic inequalities exist between genders. We acknowledge that male violence against women remains the most widespread and structurally significant form of gender-based violence. However, this should not be a reason to ignore or deny the pain and suffering of male victims. We reject the theory of "gender symmetry" in domestic violence and believe that creating a safe space for men is also an effective way to combat violence against women.

Impact and insights

infoMann was officially recognised as a support service for victims of domestic violence (SAVVD) on 1 December 2024. Since then, we have noticed a significant increase in the number of male victims identified by the police and public prosecutor's office. However, infoMann currently faces legal and structural challenges, especially when it comes to custody cases and accommodation. Our emergency shelters only provide temporary accommodation – and spaces are limited. In reality, many clients remain in the shelters longer than planned due to difficulties in re-entering the job and housing markets. One of infoMann's objectives is to raise public awareness of male victims of domestic violence, as their experiences are still often ignored, dismissed or rendered invisible – even though a significant number of men are affected. We also believe that it is important to promote education and break down stereotypes within the justice system. We often witness situations where judges automatically assume that the mother is the most suitable caregiver for children – regardless of the family's actual circumstances and criminal context.

Transferable approaches and inspiration for others

After working closely with male victims of domestic violence for over 13 years, we have learned to recognise the unspoken emotions, shame and isolation that many experience. infoMann is the only institution in Luxembourg that provides men with a safe space through temporary accommodation and supports them in rebuilding their lives. Our multidisciplinary and forward-thinking approach highlights the limitations of current societal and institutional frameworks in addressing this form of violence. As more and more men reach out for help, we are inspired to continuously adapt and expand our services.

RESOURCES AND LINKS

Website:

<https://acttogether.lu/infomann>

Instagram:

<https://instagram.com/infomann.lu>

facebook:

<https://facebook.com/infomann.lu>

LinkedIn:

<https://linkedin.com/company/infomann>

SWITZERLAND

Legal framework

Acts of violence – whether in public or private settings – are punishable under Swiss law. The Criminal Code (StGB)^[40] covers offences such as bodily harm, threats, coercion, (repeated) assault, sexual coercion and rape. As of 1 April 2004, violence within marriages and intimate partnerships is prosecuted ex officio, which means that the victim does not need to file a formal complaint for legal action to begin. Article 28b of the Swiss Civil Code (ZGB) provides an additional legal basis for protective action, requiring cantons to implement civil measures such as police eviction and restraining orders – regardless of the perpetrator's gender.^[41] Support for victims of domestic violence is outlined in the Victim Assistance Act (OHG), which entered into force on 1 January 2009.^[42] Anyone who has suffered physical, psychological or sexual harm as a result of a criminal offence is entitled to assistance – even without filing a police report. Other relevant legal texts include the Swiss Criminal Procedure Code (StPO)^[43] and the Istanbul Convention, which came into effect in Switzerland in 2018. The Convention focuses on gender-based and domestic violence and is implemented nationally by the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE). Male victims of domestic violence are not explicitly included in the Convention's scope. However, legal reforms are currently being drafted to improve protective mechanisms for all individuals affected by violence.^[44]

Specific support services for male victims of domestic violence

Switzerland does not have a nationwide network of shelters or free services specifically designed for male victims. While victim support services are officially open to everyone, access often varies from canton to canton, and many services are not tailored to men's needs. Some are even aimed exclusively at women. Outside of formal victim support, there are a number of counselling services for boys and men in various areas (e. g. offender programmes, addiction support and violence prevention). However, most violence counselling services focus primarily on offender intervention. An overview of men's counselling centres in Switzerland is provided by männer.ch.

ZwüscheHalt e. V. is a non-profit association that runs three men's shelters with a total of 19 spaces in Bern, Lucerne and Zurich. They also offer protection and counselling for fathers with children. There is another facility in Ticino. Pharos is an association that provides psychological and social support to male victims in Geneva.

Child welfare falls within the remit of the Child and Adult Protection Authority (KESB). Some cantons now offer confidential medical care and forensic evidence collection. While there is no telephone helpline or online counselling service providing accessible support specifically for male victims of violence, they can contact the general victim support platform (www.onlineopferberatung.ch) or the "Dargebotene Hand" helpline (143), which are open to all genders.

⁴⁰ Swiss Criminal Code: https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/54/757_781_799/en

⁴¹ Swiss Civil Code: https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/24/233_245_233/en

⁴² Victim Assistance Act (OHG): <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2008/232/de>

⁴³ Swiss Criminal Procedure Code (StPO): <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2010/267/en>

⁴⁴ Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE), 2025:

"Gewalt gegen Frauen – Ausmass und Rechtslage": <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2010/267/en>

Institutional framework and funding structure

In Switzerland, support services for victims of domestic violence are primarily run by civil society organisations. The country has a federal structure, and each canton organises its support mechanism a little differently. Victim support centres that employ qualified professionals and provide services under the Victim Assistance Act (OHG) are eligible for public funding. Organisations not officially recognised under the OHG (e. g. ZwüscheHalt) are not legally entitled to funding and instead rely on paid services, membership fees and donations. Depending on each individual's personal circumstances, some services may be covered by victim support funds or social welfare (e. g. social services). Additional funding is sometimes available from other public sources (e. g. cantonal lottery funds). A significant amount of work is carried out by volunteers.

In general, counselling services for boys and men lack a strong institutional basis and are not fully embedded in the mainstream psychosocial support system. The umbrella association of men's and fathers' organisations, männer.ch, is actively working to change that in cooperation with key stakeholders such as police officers, civil servants and healthcare professionals.

Extent of male victimisation

Since 2009, police crime statistics in Switzerland have tracked domestic violence by gender. 11,849 cases of domestic violence were recorded in 2024 – and 30.2 % of the victims were boys and men.^[45] The country's victim support services registered a total of 27,743 counselling sessions, 16.1 % of which involved male victims.^[46] The men's shelters operated by ZwüscheHalt e. V. reported 2,843 overnight stays in 2024 (for men and seven children) and 343 counselling sessions.^[47] The population's experiences of violence are also collected and compared in a regular Crime Survey; while overall victimisation rates remain below 1 % in most cases (except for stalking), the 2022 survey confirms that men are also affected by domestic violence. However, reporting rates are low: only 10.5 % for sexualised violence and 28.9 % for bodily harm.^[48]

Public perception and media representation

In both public discourse and media coverage, the focus remains primarily on women as victims of domestic violence. There are currently no targeted campaigns aimed at raising public awareness of male victimisation. Similarly, gender equality work is still largely centred on women, and the professional community has also tended to focus more on female victims. At the same time, most violence prevention programmes are aimed at boys and men as potential perpetrators. This gender-specific divide between perpetrator intervention schemes and victim support services creates barriers for male victims seeking accessible support. Although boys and men are increasingly recognised as victims, they are rarely viewed as vulnerable or in need of protection. Fathers are especially overlooked, as child protection is frequently seen as an issue for mothers. Furthermore, traditional gender stereotypes – that men should be tough, independent and emotionally resilient – make it even harder for male victims to ask for help and be taken seriously by institutions and society as a whole.

⁴⁵ Federal Statistical Office: "Häusliche Gewalt":

<https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/crime-criminal-justice/police/domestic-violence.html>

⁴⁶ Federal Statistical Office "Victim support statistics 2024": <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en.gnpdetail.2025-0466.html>

⁴⁷ Zwüschehalt, 2025: "Jahresbericht 2024": https://www.zwueschehalt.ch/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2024_Jahresbericht_ZWH.pdf

⁴⁸ Markwalder, Biberstein and Baier:

"Analysen im Rahmen des Crime Survey 2022 im Auftrag des Eidgenössischen Büros für die Gleichstellung von Frau und Mann (EBG)"

Accessibility, barriers and challenges

Most victims access support on their own initiative or are referred by the police, victim support centres or family members. That's why effective networking between service providers is so important. National and local media coverage helps bring male victims into the public eye while raising awareness of the services available to them and breaking down deep-rooted stereotypes that men should be strong, invulnerable and not in need of protection.

As support and reporting systems are currently built on a strict separation of victim and perpetrator roles, it is often difficult to acknowledge complex patterns of violence (e. g. mutual violence or psychological abuse). This makes it harder for male victims to access protective services and reinforces social stigmas. Despite these structural challenges, violence prevention networks are growing, and men's organisations are increasingly included in regional roundtable discussions on domestic violence and the Istanbul Convention.

However, many professionals still need more training to understand and support male victims. When incidents are reported to the police, men tend to be removed from their home – even if they are the victims themselves or the violence is mutual. Fathers face the added challenge of being unable to take their children with them, as they could be accused of child abduction.

Money is another barrier. As many facilities don't receive full public funding, men often have to pay for support themselves – and service providers struggle to stay afloat. There are hardly any safe spaces for teenage boys. All in all, support for male victims varies greatly from canton to canton, and the system remains fragmented and underfunded.

FURTHER INFORMATION FOR BOYS AND MEN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE:

Victim Support Switzerland:

<https://www.opferhilfe-schweiz.ch/en/>

"Dargebotene Hand":

<https://www.143.ch/en/>

Men's counselling map (männer.ch)

<https://maenner.ch/angebot/beratungslandkarte>

"Zwüschehalt":

<https://zwueschehalt.ch>

"Pharos-Genève":

<https://pharos-geneve.ch>

ZwüscheHalt: shelters for men and fathers



ZwüscheHalt, based in Brugg, is an independent initiative offering shelters for men and fathers in the German-speaking part of Switzerland – with locations in Zurich, Lucerne and Bern.

Target groups and access

ZwüscheHalt offers shelter and support to men and fathers (with their children) who are affected by domestic violence. We usually take in men aged 18 and over, but in special cases, our facilities can also accommodate 17-year-olds – in close cooperation with the Child and Adult Protection Authority (KESB).

Services and counselling approach

Our shelters offer protection, accommodation, counselling and follow-up support for men and fathers with children who are affected by domestic violence. We provide social, psychosocial and educational counselling over the phone, online and in person. A team of trained professionals run an educational programme for children staying in our facilities. If necessary, we accompany men to important appointments related to their emergency situation. We also help fathers stay in touch with their children during this time. Our work is based on systemic counselling.

Cooperation and networks

ZwüscheHalt aims to build strong partnerships with organisations such as the KESB, victim support services, the police, social services, parent counselling centres, child psychologists, schools and nurseries. We are yet to collaborate with women's shelters.

Guiding principles, values and belief

ZwüscheHalt advocates for the equal treatment of men affected by domestic violence, as male experiences of violence sadly continue to be ignored or downplayed in public discourse. Even within public institutions like victim support services, men are often not perceived as needing protection. There is a common misconception that men should be able to defend themselves, and that women don't pose a threat – even to children.

Our doors are open to all men – regardless of their background or sexual orientation. We do not tolerate any form of violence or any discriminatory or demeaning statements about women or others.

Impact and insights

We are still not reaching as many men as we should. Most of the individuals who contact us are middle-aged men with young children (up to around eight years old). Young adults tend to be referred by victim support services. As domestic violence against men remains a social taboo and is rarely acknowledged in the media, male victims are often hesitant to seek help. They often remain invisible – or are expected to remain invisible for fear that speaking up might be seen as downplaying violence against women. However, we are guided by the belief that all victims of violence deserve equal support. With this in mind, we are launching an awareness campaign in Zurich on 3 June 2025, featuring digital displays in public transport and at petrol stations. The campaign video will also be posted on our website.

Transferable approaches and inspiration for others

One of our key strengths is our systemic approach, which keeps the overall situation in view at all times. This helps us recognise everyone involved in the process as potential victims – without jumping to premature and polarising conclusions.

It also helps us de-escalate conflicts and identify root causes – with a focus on finding solutions. However, we regularly encounter structural barriers, as many support systems and professionals still rely heavily on rigid victim vs. offender models, which can hamper effective collaboration and meaningful progress.

RESOURCES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Website:

<https://zwueschehalt.ch>

BARRIERS FACED BY BOYS AND MEN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE

While many of the challenges that prevent people from getting help for domestic violence are shared across all genders, the aim of this overview is to highlight the specific barriers faced by boys and men. These issues have been identified by professionals from various countries, who have shared their experiences and observations. We would like to focus primarily on structural, societal and personal obstacles – without downplaying or ignoring the experiences of other affected groups.

There are two hidden mechanisms that shape how violence against men is perceived. The first is normalisation; some forms of violence are seen as just a "normal" part of "being a man" and not something to seek help for. This makes it harder to recognise such experiences and call them what they really are: acts of violence. The second mechanism is taboo and shame; experiences of violence that lead to feelings of powerlessness, vulnerability or loss of control contradict traditional patriarchal ideals of masculinity. There is a misconception that boys and men are not victims, so victims cannot be male. This makes it especially hard for boys and men to recognise themselves as victims and take the first step towards asking for help.^[49]

Both mechanisms are reinforced by traditional gender norms, which equate masculinity with self-control, independence and invulnerability. By internalising these expectations, boys and men are less inclined to show signs of weakness or ask for help – especially in stigmatised areas such as (domestic) violence. As a result, many male victims attempt to suppress or downplay their experiences – or try to handle them on their own – instead of actively seeking support.^[50]

These individual mechanisms are compounded by societal and institutional obstacles. One thing that has come up during our professional exchanges is how violence against boys and men is still rarely addressed in public discourse. When people talk about domestic violence, they tend to picture women as victims. Boys and men are typically portrayed as perpetrators, while male victims are seen as rare exceptions and are barely visible in the media or in institutional narratives. As a result, many boys and men don't see themselves as potential victims – or as being entitled to support. At the same time, outdated gender stereotypes can make it harder for others – even professionals – to see male victims as vulnerable and in need of protection.

Our experience also shows that many men who do seek help are concerned that they won't be taken seriously, are worried about how their friends or family might react, or fear that they could be taken away from their children.

⁴⁹ Ludger Junnitz et al., 2004: "Gewalt gegen Männer. Personale Gewaltwiderfahrnisse von Männern in Deutschland. Pilotstudie im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend"

⁵⁰ Federal Coordination Office for the Protection of Male Victims of Violence, 2021: "Niedrigschwelligkeit in Hilfeangeboten von Männer*schutz- und Unterstützungseinrichtungen"

Our professional exchanges have also revealed the structural hurdles faced by male victims when trying to get help for domestic violence. Many counselling centres are tailored to a female target audience in terms of language and presentation. Dedicated protection services for male victims are not sufficiently available across all regions. And since the support and counselling system often draws a sharp line between victims and perpetrators, men in more complex situations – where those lines are blurred – often find no place within this framework.

Experts from the countries participating in our project have identified several additional obstacles. For example, many men see themselves as isolated cases. The way violence is portrayed in the media, where women are almost exclusively cast as victims, makes it even harder for men to speak up for fear of being stigmatised. Furthermore, old-fashioned views of masculinity within the support system itself often lead to men being denied help and protection. In custody and visitation proceedings, for example, fathers report that their parenting skills are often questioned. And when counselling centres lack a gender-sensitive approach, male professionals or messaging clearly aimed at male victims, boys and men may not feel like those spaces are meant for them.

All of these obstacles show just how hard it can be for boys and men to access support for domestic violence. That's why we need to raise awareness, change our structures and offer more targeted services so that male victims can feel safe, seen and supported.

REACHING BOYS AND MEN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE – PRACTICAL INSIGHTS

Boys and men are a diverse group. They differ in age, education, sexual orientation, financial situation, migration history, language skills, social environment, health and many other factors. But they are united by the shared need to navigate society's expectations of masculinity in their everyday lives – even if each individual experiences and processes those pressures differently.

There is no universal method for reaching men. Especially when it comes to broaching sensitive topics and issues that carry shame, such as violence, it can be particularly challenging to encourage male victims to seek counselling. They often have to overcome a number of personal obstacles before reaching out for help. This makes it all the more important to minimise external barriers, such as unclear institutional responsibilities, impersonal messaging and inaccessible services.

What matters most is that boys and men feel addressed – whether through the language, visuals, atmosphere and formats used in counselling or the attitude of the professionals involved. There is no single recipe for success. Not all elements are specific to boys and men affected by violence – many also apply to victims of other genders. However, for men shaped by traditional notions of masculinity, it is especially important to offer accessible support pathways that build trust in the system. The following section presents a range of practical ideas and insights that are proven to improve outreach to boys and men affected by violence.^{[51][52][53]}

Content of services

- 🟡 Anonymous and face-saving contact options (e. g. helplines, email counselling or online chats) can make the first step easier, especially when someone is ashamed or unsure.
- 🟡 Letting people choose how they reach out for support helps them regain a sense of control, which is crucial for those who have felt powerless in the past.
- 🟡 Open-invitation events (e. g. open days, information sessions, men's cafés) create accessible opportunities for people to get in touch.
- 🟡 General counselling formats that are not limited to a single topic allow people to engage with a variety of concerns – and the actual issue (e. g. violence) can be revealed and discussed later in the process.
- 🟡 It is important to clearly communicate which topics are up for discussion, so that people know which issues can be addressed in counselling.
- 🟡 Active formats such as "walk-and-talk sessions" and proactive outreach can be particularly helpful – especially for those unfamiliar with traditional counselling settings.
- 🟡 Support programmes can be experimental – with more of a "workshop" vibe than a formal therapy feel. Talking while doing something together can help to break down barriers.

⁵¹ Markus Theunert, 2011: "Männer erreichen, beraten, begleiten. Ein Leitfaden für die Praxis"

⁵² Federal Forum for Men, 2022: "Men well advised"

⁵³ Federal Coordination Office for the Protection of Male Victims of Violence, 2021: "Niedrigschwelligkeit in Hilfeangeboten von Männer*schutz- und Unterstützungseinrichtungen"

Essential ingredients for inclusive services

- Services should be easy to access with central locations and flexible opening hours – including late afternoons, evenings and weekends.
- Offering counselling outside regular working hours is especially important, as many men work full-time and struggle to attend appointments during the week.
- Keeping services free or affordable can help to break down financial barriers that prevent some people from seeking help.
- 24/7 helplines are especially valuable in times of crisis, as support services are often contacted at nights or weekends.
- Accessibility is key to inclusion. This can be achieved through plain and simple language, accessible spaces and multilingual initiatives.
- Interior design is also important – bright colours, clear signage, modern décor and a friendly atmosphere can make spaces more inviting, helping to avoid the impression that the services are only intended for a specific group of people.

Organisational culture and practice

- A gender-sensitive team mindset is essential – professionals should be aware of issues specific to men, including common responses such as shame, guilt and withdrawal. This also means reflecting on gender-based privileges and disadvantages.
- It is important to understand societal expectations around masculinity, which can prevent many people from seeking help.
- Diverse teams help to build trust and incorporate a range of perspectives.
- Institutions should reflect on their own stance and actively engage with their guiding principles and target groups – rather than automatically assuming that their services appeal to everyone.
- Cooperating with other service providers – even outside the field of violence prevention (e. g. youth services, employment schemes, addiction counselling, sports clubs) – opens doors to groups that are yet to be reached.

Public outreach, representation and networking

- Boys and men should be visibly shown on websites, in flyers and on posters, so that they connect with the messaging.
- The use of language should be clearly tailored to the target audience (including messages such as "For men affected by violence" instead of more abstract phrasing like "For victims of violence").
- Websites should be easy to navigate, with key information quickly accessible and clearly presented – even on mobile devices.
- Compact materials in formats like wallet cards or postcards are practical and accessible.
- Choosing programme names that resonate with men – and avoiding exclusively female terms or connotations – can encourage men to ask for help.
- Men are often best reached through existing networks (e. g. sports clubs, fathers' initiatives, healthcare services or career support programmes).

- Partnering with men's community spaces, open workshops, self-help initiatives, drop-in centres and similar facilities can make it easier for men to access services.
- It is also important to shed light on male vulnerability in the media through cinema ads, social media and local news

DISTANCING FROM ANTI-FEMINIST NARRATIVES

Over the course of our professional exchanges, we have discussed the ways in which projects aimed at men affected by violence can take a clear stand against anti-feminist and anti-democratic ideologies – especially in light of the fact that such movements will often attempt to exploit male experiences of violence to further their own narratives. We believe that a firm, equality-driven stance is essential when working with boys and men affected by violence, in order to prevent the topic from being hijacked by harmful groups.

The following perspectives, insights and reflections have emerged from our exchanges:

Everyone deserves to be protected from violence

Violence prevention and victim protection are for everyone – regardless of gender or identity.

Structural violence also needs to be addressed

Domestic violence is often a reflection of societal power structures. Those involved in our discussions have emphasised that women and trans*, intersex* and non-binary individuals are disproportionately affected by sexualised and domestic violence – mostly at the hands of men. This structural reality needs to be acknowledged if we are to effectively tackle the root causes and dynamics of gender-based violence.

We need to highlight male experiences – without undermining others

During our discussions, many professionals have reported that men affected by violence often remain hidden – not because their experiences are less valid, but because victim-perpetrator stereotypes make them harder to recognise. That's why it is important to acknowledge and highlight male vulnerability – without diminishing the experiences of women and trans*, intersex* and non-binary individuals.

Violence protection can be advanced through solidarity

Our discussions have made it clear that effective protection for boys and men affected by violence can only be developed in partnership with women's protection services. Solidarity and cooperation among all stakeholders are essential to strengthening safe spaces and support systems for everyone affected by violence. As many services for boys and men have emerged from feminist support structures, there is already a strong foundation for continued partnerships in this area. Projects working with male victims should stand in solidarity with the concerns of women and TIN individuals, advocating for gender justice and social diversity.

Domestic violence is a complex issue

Violence within families and intimate relationships can happen in many ways – it can be one-sided or mutual and can involve people of any gender. But it is also true that men are responsible for a large number of cases – especially with regard to sexualised violence and murder. This is partly due to patriarchal structures. The complexity of the situation demands a careful approach to counselling, protection and prevention. In counselling, it is important to show solidarity with victims while critically reflecting on each individual situation, especially when someone might be both a victim and perpetrator.

Critical reflection and boundaries should be part of professional practice

Some projects take an explicitly feminist or pro-feminist approach to their work. Those involved in our discussions have emphasised that working with male victims of violence also means engaging with male privilege and traditional gender stereotypes. They have also pointed out that taking a clear stand against anti-feminist narratives – even within counselling settings – is an essential part of their work.

Professional values should prevail over political agendas

In response to the risk of co-optation by men's rights or anti-democratic movements, various projects have highlighted the need for strong guiding principles, clear mission statements and working environments that are sensitive to discrimination. These values should be clearly and actively communicated to the public.



Federal Coordination Office
for the Protection of
Male Victims of Violence



**"It's okay for
men to get help.
Just do it!"**

Hannes Kreschel (victim of psychological violence in a relationship)

One in five victims of domestic violence is a man.

www.ohne-gewalt-leben.de/en

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