Information and guidance: How to use the calculator to estimate the cost of domestic abuse and interpret the results

We hope you will find this calculator useful for demonstrating the value of providing specialist domestic abuse support services, informing funding applications and advocacy, and making the case for investment in effective prevention and support.

The calculator estimates the **lifetime cost of domestic abuse** for women aged 16 and over across a range of services and impacts. It can estimate costs for women who experienced domestic abuse in the previous 12 months in a local area or across England and Wales, or estimate the lifetime cost to society associated with the number of women supported by a specialist service.

These are lifetime costs for a cohort of women who experienced domestic abuse in a particular year. Each year, a new cohort experiences domestic abuse and may incur costs over a number of years. The results can therefore be large: **it is important to understand that they represent estimated lifetime costs, not costs incurred in a single year.**

PLEASE NOTE: Before using the calculator, please read the information about the data, methods and limitations below. This will help you understand and explain the results appropriately. The step-by-step guidance begins in the 'Calculator guidance' section on page 3.

Data

The calculator was developed using a rapid review, with a systematic approach, to identify relevant unit costs and estimates of how long costs or service use may continue. Much of the relevant evidence came from government reports and specialist service-provider research.

The data used for this calculator are:

1. 2021 Census data for England and Wales
   a. This provides the number of women aged 16 and over living in England and Wales and in each local authority area. These data are used to calculate estimates for local areas.
2. Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), Office for National Statistics (ONS)
   a. Data from the self-completion survey covering 2017/18 to 2022/23 were analysed to estimate the relative proportions of women experiencing domestic abuse who use different services or experience different costs. Regression

analysis was used to adjust estimates for sex and ethnicity. For estimates of service use, only the 2017/18 and 2022/23 survey years were used.

3. A rapid review of published literature
   a. A rapid review using a systematic approach was conducted to identify estimates of the unit costs and duration of different services and impacts associated with domestic abuse. Sources included government reports, peer-reviewed research and reports from specialist service providers. These sources were used to estimate costs across the different categories included in the calculator, with costs expressed in 2025 prices.

Limitations of the calculator

There are important caveats to note when interpreting the results.

1. The results are estimates of the lifetime cost burden of domestic abuse, not exact accounts of costs for an individual, service or local area. They should be treated as indicative estimates.

2. The calculator focuses on women aged 16 and over. The full cost to society is likely to be larger because men and children can also experience domestic abuse.

3. The prevalence of domestic abuse varies between local areas, but this variation could not be incorporated into the local-area estimates. The number of people reporting domestic abuse in survey samples is too small to provide robust local-level prevalence estimates. The calculator therefore applies national prevalence estimates to local population data.

4. As a result, a local-area estimate may overestimate or underestimate the true burden in that area. The prevalence of domestic abuse is not the same across all localities in England and Wales.

5. Some potentially relevant costs may not be included. For example, the calculator may not capture all informal work and caring activity, such as looking after children and other domestic activities.

6. For some cost components, including social care, criminal and civil justice, housing and quality-adjusted life year (QALY) loss, the relative proportions could not be estimated directly from CSEW data, so published literature was used.

The estimates should be used alongside local knowledge and other evidence, rather than as a precise measure of the costs experienced by any individual area or service.

Calculator guidance

Follow the simple step-by-step instructions below.

The only information you will need to hand is:

- The number of women service users aged 16 and over if using the **Specialist Services Calculator**.
- Your local authority area if using the **National and Local Area Calculator**.

Step 1: Choose a calculator

Select one of the two calculator tabs at the top of the page.

Choose '**National and Local Area Calculator'** to estimate the lifetime cost burden for women aged 16 and over who experienced domestic abuse in the previous 12 months in a local area or across England and Wales.

Choose '**Specialist Services Calculator'** if you work for a specialist domestic abuse support service and want to estimate the lifetime cost to society associated with the women your service supports.

Step 2: Enter the area or number of service users

If you are using the **National and Local Area Calculator**, select the area from the 'Area name' dropdown. You can choose a local area or England and Wales for a national estimate. The calculator displays an estimate of the number of women aged 16 and over who experienced domestic abuse in the last 12 months.

If you are using the **Specialist Services Calculator**, enter the number of adult women service users you want to include. The calculator is designed for women aged 16 and over.

Step 3: Select the types of cost to include

Select the cost categories you want included in your calculation. You can choose all relevant categories or focus on specific types of cost. Please see Definitions on page 4 and 5 for the descriptions of services.

The categories available are described in the 'Definitions' section below. Make sure you understand which categories are included when comparing results or sharing a total.

Step 4: Calculate and review the results

Click 'Calculate'. The calculator will process the selections and display the estimated lifetime costs in the results area. Allow a moment for the calculation to complete.

Check which area or number of service users you entered and which cost categories you selected. If you change any of these, calculate again to generate a result based on the revised choices.

The result represents **the estimated lifetime cost** associated with the cohort of women who experienced domestic abuse in the previous 12 months, or with the number of women service users entered. It is not the amount spent in that year alone.

What should I do with my results?

We hope you find the results useful and share them widely.

Specialist domestic abuse support services can use the results to help demonstrate the value of their work in funding applications, service planning and advocacy.

Local authorities, commissioners, MPs and members of the public can use the results to support arguments for investment in specialist domestic abuse services and effective prevention measures.

The calculator can help illustrate the potential scale of the costs associated with domestic abuse across different services and areas. However, the results should be interpreted alongside the limitations described above and should not be treated as a precise measure of local costs or guaranteed savings.

Definitions

Physical health support: Estimated health service costs associated with physical harm or injuries linked to domestic abuse and their treatment.

Mental health support: Estimated mental health service costs associated with psychological harm linked to domestic abuse and its treatment.

Social care: Estimated social care costs associated with domestic abuse.

Police: Estimated costs associated with police involvement in domestic abuse.

Criminal justice: Estimated costs associated with criminal justice processes related to domestic abuse.

Civil justice: Estimated costs associated with civil justice processes related to domestic abuse.

Incarceration: Estimated costs associated with the imprisonment of perpetrators.

Cost to specialist support services: Estimated costs of specialist domestic abuse support services.

Housing: Estimated housing-related costs associated with domestic abuse.

Local authority (not housing): Estimated local authority costs other than housing-related costs.

Productivity loss: Estimated lost economic productivity associated with domestic abuse, including effects such as job loss and time off work.

QALY loss (Quality-Adjusted Life Years): An estimate of losses in quality and duration of life. A QALY is a measure used to express health-related quality and length of life.

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This calculator was developed in collaboration between the UK Prevention Research Partnership VISION consortium and the Women's Budget Group.





