

Self-Risk Assessment When You Are Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence

This checklist is based on the MARAM Framework (Victoria). It is designed to help you reflect on your situation and encourage you to reach out for support when necessary. If you tick several of the serious risk factors, your risk may be high. Please consider reaching out for support.

Serious Risk Factors:

(those that may indicate an increased risk of the victim being killed or almost killed)

- **Physical assault while pregnant/ new birth** - Violence may start or escalate during pregnancy, increasing risk to mother and child. Strong indicator of future harm.
- **Planning to leave or recent separation** - Period around separation is extremely high risk — particularly within the first 2 months post-separation.
- **Escalation of violence** - Any increase in severity or frequency of abuse is linked to higher risk of serious harm or lethality.
- **Controlling behaviours** - Strongly correlated with homicide. Includes isolation, micromanagement, financial, cultural, or tech control.
- **Access to weapons or use of weapon in most recent event** - Access to guns, knives, or any threatening object increases risk of serious harm or death. Past weapon use indicates high likelihood of future violence.
- **Strangulation/choking** - High lethality risk; linked to traumatic brain injury and death. Always requires serious intervention.
- **Threats to kill** - Specific or repeated threats to kill should always be treated as genuine and highly dangerous.
- **Threats or harm to pets** - Used to control or terrorise the victim. Strong link to broader patterns of abuse.
- **Threats or attempts of self-harm/suicide** - Can be used as a way to control; high risk for murder—suicide scenarios.
- **Stalking** - Intimate partner stalking, tech abuse, obsessive monitoring—especially dangerous after separation.
- **Sexual assault** - Strongly linked to other forms of violence and control. Indicator of severe coercion.
- **Obsessive/jealous behaviour** - Includes entitlement, possessiveness, and rigid gender beliefs — major warning signs.
- **Unemployment/ disengagement** - Linked to financial stress, resentment, and increased likelihood of violence.
- **Drug/alcohol misuse** - Substance abuse contributes to volatility and diminished impulse control.

Other Risk Factors to Consider

- **Imminence** - Court proceedings, prison release, or relocation may trigger rapid escalation.
- **Financial abuse / stress** - Includes control of finances, forced poverty, or perpetrator gambling — linked to higher risk and entrapment.
- **Harmed or threatened victim/family** - Physical/emotional abuse or threats to family signal high ongoing risk.
- **Breaches of court orders** - Ignoring legal protections indicates disregard for authority and heightened risk.
- **History of family violence** - Predictive of ongoing or escalated abuse. Past behaviour is a strong indicator.
- **History of other violence** - History of violence outside family shows pattern of risk, particularly if weapons used.
- **Mental illness (esp. depression)** - Especially relevant in murder–suicide risk; may exacerbate other risk factors.
- **Isolation** - Reduces victim's ability to seek help; increases perpetrator control and undetected harm.
- **Physical harm** - Repeated physical abuse, especially to head or involving weapons, is a lethality indicator.
- **Emotional abuse** - Used to destabilise, control, and isolate victim. Impacts mental and physical wellbeing.
- **Property damage** - Used to intimidate, threaten, or punish. Also contributes to financial abuse.

What To Do Next

If you ticked several of the serious risk factors, your situation may be very high risk. Even if only other factors apply, it is important to seek support.

In an emergency, call 000

Call 1800 RESPECT (24/7): 1800 737 732 – National support service

Safe Steps (24/7 in Victoria): 1800 015 188

You do not need to wait for a crisis to ask for help. You deserve safety and support.