

Young Women and Economic Abuse

The Young Women's Trust report, [Picking up the Pieces](#) explored young women's experiences on 2020 and found that around one in ten young women reported experiencing forms of economic abuse. This abuse occurred alongside the pandemic causing loss of income and increased poverty, with reports of skipping meals and accessing benefits and food banks for the first time. The report combined a survey with 4000 young people with 60 in-depth peer research interviews with young women. An estimated 1.5 million young women had lost income since the coronavirus pandemic and 750,000 had been made to come into work despite concerns about their safety.

This briefing explores the data on economic abuse in more detail, alongside learning from applications to Young Women's Trust Emergency Fund over the last year, and links to support and resources from Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA).

We are aware that experiences of abuse are often under reported in large scale surveys as young women may not want to disclose this or may not recognise their experiences as abuse. Despite this, the forms of economic abuse young women reported included a partner or family member using control, threats or violence to influence their choice of education training and employment (14%), stop them studying (11%), stop them having a job or earning money (9%), or to take their benefits, wages, or money for essential items like food (7%).

This was significantly higher for young women on the lowest or no pay, young black or mixed ethnicity women, and young disabled women, rising to almost a quarter on some forms of abuse. For example, 22% of young disabled women said they had been deprived of basic needs (e.g. food, shelter, sleep, assistive aids) by a partner or family member.

The group of young women that most commonly reported experiencing economic abuse were young women with children, and specifically young single parents at around 30% on all forms of economic abuse. This was predominantly reported as being experienced from their partner/ex partner.

We are constantly arguing about money because he's obviously bringing all the money and I'm not getting anything in. [On a joint claim now for universal credit, getting less] – I don't get any help from my council taxes which I find is wrong because they should help both people.

I couldn't take being in the house any longer. And the kids were making me very overwhelmed. When I feel like I'm caged in, or I feel like I'm trapped, like I can't breathe. I was getting more angry quickly. I was depressed. I was also going through domestic violence during the time of the lockdown. So a lot is going on for me.

Young Women interviewed for the Picking up the Pieces report

Young Women's Trust's Emergency Fund has given grants to young women aged 18-30 who were financially struggling over the last year. Many of the applications reference economic abuse:

Sarah is a victim of domestic abuse, her husband lost his job and became even more abusive including financial abuse. He has left the young woman in lots of debt, unpaid utility bills and rent arrears. He has put all the bills and unpaid credit cards in her name and she is facing huge debt.*

This young woman is solely reliant on her mother who has been a victim of domestic violence by her husband, due to which she has been subjected to many types of abuse including financial abuse leading her to be heavily in debt, and unable to find a job due to the coronavirus situation. The young woman herself is also suffering great difficulty in being able to work or support herself considering the current situation.

Chloe has fled domestic abuse and moved property twice with her four children in the last year. She has struggled financially due to the two moves this year and previous financial abuse from the perpetrator leaving her in debt.

She is a young Moroccan women who got married to a UK citizen in Morocco and came to the UK on a spouse visa. The domestic abuse started as soon as she arrived in the UK which included physical, emotional and financial abuse. She has been kept in her flat and was very isolated and due to the lockdown felt even more vulnerable.

Gemma is currently staying in a women's refuge with her child and is struggling to access services. Due to a level of financial abuse she would benefit from receiving some funds to help her with everyday expenses for herself and her child.

** All names have been changed*

Recommendations

More support is needed for young women at risk of or experiencing economic abuse, this includes:

- An accessible national support service for young women experiencing economic abuse.
- Awareness raising work in schools and colleges on economic abuse.
- More training for professionals who may identify young women experiencing economic abuse, such as employers, those working in job centres, banks, schools and colleges (such as provided by SEA).
- More research on the prevalence and types of economic abuse young women experience, including services young women access asking about and discussing economic abuse.

Accessing Support

Surviving Economic Abuse (SEA) is the only UK charity dedicated to raising awareness of economic abuse and transforming responses to it. They have links to resources and sources of support on their website: <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/i-need-help/>

SEA also have resource specifically for supporting children affected by economic abuse: <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/i-need-help/getting-support/supporting-children/>

Young Women's Trust is a feminist organisation working to achieve economic justice for young women. If you need support with accessing work, building skills or planning for the future, please see our Work it Out Service: <https://www.youngwomenstrust.org/get-support/>