*From 25 November to 10 December 2026, the Zonta Club Brussel Zavel is supporting UN Women's international campaign '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence' to raise public awareness of violence against women and girls. Our aim is to raise awareness, publicise support services and encourage everyone to take action.*

**A widespread reality, yet largely hidden**

According to the latest estimates from the WHO and its United Nations partners, 840 million women and girls aged 15 and over – nearly one in three – have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner, or sexual violence from another person, at some point in their lives.[1] This estimate does not take into account psychological or economic violence. The reality is therefore even more widespread.

Such violence can be fatal. In 2024, around 50,000 women and girls were killed by an intimate partner or a family member – an average of 137 victims per day.[2]

Belgium is not spared. According to the European Survey on Gender-Based Violence (EU-GBV, 2021–2022), 31 per cent of women aged 18 to 74 have experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence at the hands of a partner or ex-partner. This definition is broader than that used in the WHO's global estimate. The prevalence stands at 42.5 per cent in Wallonia and 33.7 per cent in Brussels, compared with 24.7 per cent in Flanders. These differences partly reflect the socio-economic composition of the populations.[3]

Violence does not always leave visible marks. Monitoring a partner's mobile phone, isolating her from her loved ones or deciding how much she can spend are all forms of control, as are humiliation, threats and harassment. Knowing how to recognise them makes it easier to speak out.

**Recognising violence, opening up dialogue**

Violence does not always leave visible traces. Monitoring a partner's mobile phone, isolating them from their loved ones, controlling their spending, humiliating them or threatening them can all be part of a pattern of control.

Recognising these behaviours helps us to better understand what a person may be going through and to offer them a non-judgemental ear. When someone confides in you, taking their story seriously, respecting their pace and offering appropriate help can provide initial support

Belgian data reveal a discrepancy. Around 70 per cent of victims of partner violence speak to a loved one about it. However, only 29.5 per cent contact a health or social services organisation, 27.6 per cent contact the police and 6.6 per cent call a helpline. Only 41 per cent of the population say they are aware that a helpline exists.[4]



**Raising awareness in everyday settings**

Through the *Zonta Says NO* campaign, we aim to bring this message to public spaces, healthcare settings, workplaces and community networks. A building lit up in orange, a poster, a shared message or a visual displaying helpline numbers are all ways of making solidarity visible.

We invite local authorities, healthcare professionals, businesses and members of the public to get involved, as far as they are able. Thanks to our partners' support, particularly in the medical and pharmaceutical sectors, the campaign can also reach people in familiar settings, without them having to disclose what they are going through to access useful information.

**The colour orange symbolises the hope for a future free from violence. Behind this visible symbol, our message is clear: you are not alone; help is available.**

**Make Men Our Allies: men and boys as allies**

Preventing violence requires the commitment of the whole of society. Through 'Make Men Our Allies', the Zonta Club Brussel Zavel invites men and boys to take part in this campaign.

This commitment is shown in everyday life: speaking out against a humiliating remark, calling out a friend who crosses the line, talking to young people about respect and consent, or supporting someone who confides in you without making decisions for them.

Everyone can contribute to an environment where violence is neither trivialised nor tolerated.

**Find out about our initiatives and get involved**

Would you like to help spread the word about the campaign, share our visuals or suggest a collaboration? We welcome any initiatives that help raise awareness of the campaign and the support resources available.

**Find out about our initiatives and how you can get involved in the Zonta Says NO campaign**

**Where can you find help in Belgium?**

- **Police emergency number: 101.**
- **Emergency medical assistance: 112.**
- **In French: 0800 30 030 — Écoute Violences Conjugales, a helpline and advice service, separate from the emergency services. Find out more**
- **In Dutch: 1712, for issues relating to violence, abuse and child maltreatment, including if you are concerned about someone. Find out more**

**Sources**


1. WHO and UN partners, *Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2023* (November 2025). World Health Organisation (WHO), prevalence estimates for 2023, published in 2025
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3. IWEPS/IBSA/Statistiek Vlaanderen, *Gender-based violence in Belgium* (EU-GBV 2021–2022), 2024: iweps.be/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/RS-HS-GBV-FR.pdf. IWEPS factsheet G011 (Wallonia) and BX1 (Brussels, Flanders).
4. IEFH, *Recommendation 2026-R/002*: igvm-iefh.belgium.be/sites/default/files/media/documents/Recommandation%20Eurostat.pdf European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Belgium profile · Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, 2026 Belgian report
5. Ibid. (recognising violence, providing non-judgemental support, offering guidance). European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Belgium profile · Institute for Gender Equality, Belgian report of 2026