

## What is Economic Abuse?

**Economic abuse** is a common form of intimate partner violence in which one person interferes with their partner's ability "to **acquire, use or maintain** economic resources" in a way that undermines their "potential for economic security and self-sufficiency."<sup>1</sup>

Financial abuse is a subset of behaviours used by a perpetrator to control, exploit or sabotage their partner or former partner's finances. Economic abuse refers to a broader set of behaviours including the control, exploitation or sabotage of economic resources like money, mobile phones, transport, food and accommodation.

In Australia, the terms financial abuse and economic abuse are often used interchangeably to refer to the broader set of behaviours; primarily because people, including victim-survivors of economic abuse have been found not to relate to the term 'economic'.<sup>2</sup>

Economic abuse often occurs alongside other forms of intimate partner violence and can be intertwined with other forms of abuse: For instance, coercing a partner to perform unwanted sexualized activity in return for money for necessities.

While anyone, in any postcode, and from any background, can experience economic abuse, women in Australia experience economic abuse at twice the rate of men. Women with a disability experience domestic and family violence and economic abuse at higher rates again.<sup>3</sup>

Some behaviours that may constitute economic abuse are listed to the right.

Limiting a partner's ability to **acquire** economic resources by:

- Not letting them work or study
- Refusing to let them claim government payments they're entitled to
- Refusing to pay child support or avoid paying the full amount
- Making them work in the family business without pay or meeting legal employment conditions
- Doing things to make it difficult for them to sustain employment, like hiding the car keys or harassing them at work.

Controlling a partner's **use** of economic resources by:

- Controlling their access to cash and bank accounts
- Making them account for every cent they spend and/or dictating what they can and can't spend money on
- Hiding financial information and assets.

Interfering with a partner's ability to **maintain** economic resources by:

- Running up debts in their name
- Damaging their property
- Refusing to contribute to household bills or spending money needed for household bills on other things
- Making them sign business documents that are represented as something else, or that they don't understand or agree with.
- Making demands of their family for further, and/or exorbitant, dowry payments.

Economic abuse can continue, or start, post-separation.

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1. Adam, A. (2008) 'Development of the Scale of Economic Abuse.' *Violence Against Women*, 14: 563-588.

2. Cameron, P. (2014) *Relationship problems and money: Women talk about financial abuse*, WIRE Women's Information and Referral Exchange.

3. Kutin, J. et al, (2017) 'Economic abuse between intimate partners in Australia: prevalence, health status, disability and financial stress', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 41:269-274.