

**Economic violence:**  
opening pathways across an unexplored gender-based violence issue for guaranteeing the women and children's fundamental rights



<http://economic-genderviolence.eu/>



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**Economic  
gender-based  
violence:  
An unexplored issue**



# Contact us:

**Project Coordinator:** Inmaculada Domínguez Fabián,  
PhD

Faculty of Business Studies and Tourism.

University of Extremadura (UEX)

Av. de la Universidad, S/N

CP 10071 Cáceres

Email: [newsletter@economic-genderviolence.eu](mailto:newsletter@economic-genderviolence.eu)

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# ECOVIO

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The concept of Economic Gender Violence.

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Detecting Economic Gender Violence.

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# 1 Introduction



**Gender-Based Violence (GBV)** may affect women from any socioeconomic position. **Gender-based Economic Abuse (EA)** consists of exerting control over the woman's access to economic resources, limiting the woman's capacity to support herself and her children, conditioning her lifestyle and generating financial dependence on the perpetrator, and undermining her possibilities to escape from the loop of abuse. In sum, it implies to **exploit the victim's financial disadvantage and controlling her access to necessary resources making her dependent upon the abuser** for among other issues, the maintenance of their children

**Although Economic Violence is recognized by the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE), and the Istanbul Convention includes in the definition of “violence against women”, is is usually not mentioned in national law,** such as the Spanish Comprehensive Law on Gender-based Violence (Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de 28 de Diciembre, de Medidas de Protección Integral contra Los Actos de Violencia de Género). On the other part, Penal or Criminal Law may refer to family abandonment or infringement of family care, but there is no mention to the potential economic control behaviour endorsed by the ex-husband over the woman.

Also, **the EA is hard to identify** because it is invisible, subtle and surreptitious . The aim of this booklet is to raise awareness on EA and to prevent its occurrence, by changing naturalized behaviours and normative patterns.



“

I can not get a full-time job, 8 hours, because I have to take children to school, .... I assume the entire burden of responsibility for the children

”

## 2 The signs

Measuring economic abuse has only recently garnered the attention of researchers, specifically with the creation of the Scale of Economic Abuse (SEA) by (Adams and collaborators in 2018, using several sources including existing anecdotal and empirical research, interviews with advocates and survivors. This SEA has 28 questions and several Economic Abuse concepts were identified including (a) preventing women's resource acquisition, (b) preventing women's resource use, and (c) exploiting women's resources, which led to the definition of two subscales including Economic Exploitation (11 items) and Economic Control (17 items).

Years later in 2016, Postmus and other authors revised the SEA, reducing it to a 12-items scale (SEA-12) that can be divided in 3 subscales: **Economic Control, Economic Exploitation, and Employment Sabotage**. This scale was tested using interviews with women in domestic violence programs, and assessed using statistical analysis. This study demonstrated that the SEAS-12 was reliable and a useful tool to quickly evaluate a victim's experience of economic abuse.



## Economic control

The first factor or dimension of the Scale of Economic Abuse (SEA-as) is called **Economic Control**. Through five questions, this dimension captures the concept of economic control and restriction, that is, the abuser's propensity to monitor and restrict the woman's ability to freely use resources in her life.

### Questions on Economic Control

- ▶ Does your (ex)partner make you ask him for money?
- ▶ Does your (ex)partner demand to know how money was spent?
- ▶ Does your (ex)partner demand that you give him receipts and/or change when you spend money?
- ▶ Does your partner keep financial information from you?
- ▶ Does your (ex)partner make important financial decisions without talking to you?

This economic control may be also conducted after the separation or divorce, through the repeated break or delay in the payment of child's support, or any other common debts, compelling the woman to claim for them continuously, in the courts or by any other means



“

I told him: look, there are these expenses and I can not afford them all, I have spent for school activities, she needs clothes, and you have not paid the child support

”

“

I was working a lot of hours every day, I could not work more, but there was never enough money, and I could not understand where did the money go...

”

## Economic Exploitation

The second factor or dimension of Economic Abuse is **Economic Exploitation**, which consists on depleting the existing funds, committing acts that create debt for the woman, or ruin her credit.

Although SEA-12 does not explicitly include any question related to housekeeping and caregiving, this should be considered since this implies an additional non-paid workload, which is usually carried out by the woman.

### Questions on Economic Exploitation

- ▶ Does your partner spend the money you need for rent or other bills?
- ▶ Does your partner pay bills late or not pay bills that were in your name or both of your names?
- ▶ Does your partner build up debt under your name by doing things like use your credit card or run up the phone bill?

“

We started two businesses, which I had to underwrite with my house and my wealth; now, I have lost everything and there's still a debt I have to pay for."

”

This economic exploitation is also reported after the separation or divorce, often by requiring the woman to bail her ex-partner out of difficult financial situations, or delaying in the payment of mortgages when the joint properties have still not been separated.

“

All the bills, water, energy, everything... Even his mobile phone was under my name, and he is not paying for all this.

”

“

When I came back from the supermarket, I had to let all the tickets and receipts on the lounge table, so he could check them

”





For many years, I had to account in fine detail all my funds, any expense, what I had paid in the supermarket, or how much I had spent on clothes...



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Other behaviours of Employment Sabotage imply criticizing or minimizing the woman's job or choice of career, or sabotaging her work responsibilities, for example offering to babysit and then not showing up (or failing their periods of custody). Other studies on the topic have reported harassing the woman by calling, texting, or even stopping by at her work

“

When I finished my Master's studies, I wanted to prepare my doctoral tesis; but he took the idea out of my mind, he said it was useless

”

“

I signed up with a temporary work agency, and soon I got a job. They offered a good salary, and then I told him about it. But he said: We will not move from here, you will not do that job...

”

### 3 Resources

- ▶ [Istanbul Convention](#)
- ▶ [European Institute for Gender Equality \(EIGE\)](#)
- ▶ [Organic Law 1/2004, of 28 December: Measures for the Integral Protection against Gender Violence.](#)
- ▶ [UN Women. Global Database on Violence against Women](#)
- ▶ [Spanish Government Office against Gender-based Violence](#)



# SIGNS OF ECONOMIC ABUSE

## ECONOMIC CONTROL



Demands to know how money was spent



Makes important financial decisions without asking you



Makes you ask him for money

## ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION



Pays bills late or does not pay bills that are in your name



Spends the money you need to pay bills or rent



Refuses to work or to do homework

## EMPLOYMENT SABOTAGE



Does things to keep you from going to work



Demands that you quit your job



Threatens or beats you if you go to work