REDC | Safeguarding IRELAND

ADULT ABUSE IN IRELAND

FINDINGS FROM A NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY OF PEOPLE LIVING IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND AGED 18+

NOVEMBER 2026



Background and context to the research

Adult abuse can take many forms, including psychological, physical, financial, sexual and online abuse, coercive control, neglect and poor or unsafe treatment by organisations. It can be subtle, develop gradually and come to appear normal over time.

Safeguarding Ireland commissioned RED C to understand how widely different forms of adult abuse are experienced or witnessed in Ireland, and what people do when abuse happens to them or someone they know.

The findings were published to mark Adult Safeguarding Day 2026 and to support greater public awareness of how to recognise, respond to and report adult abuse.



Research methodology

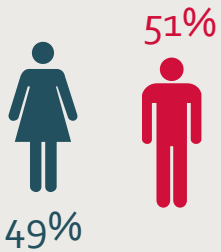
Online research was conducted with n=1,010 ROI adults aged 18+ living in the Republic of Ireland. Respondents were recruited using RED C Live, RED C's own online panel of over 40,000 members.

Quota controls were used to ensure a nationally representative sample of ROI adults aged 18+, with interlocking quotas to provide extra confidence in sample profile. Data was weighted across gender, age, region and social class to ensure a nationally representative sample based on latest CSO Census of Population data.

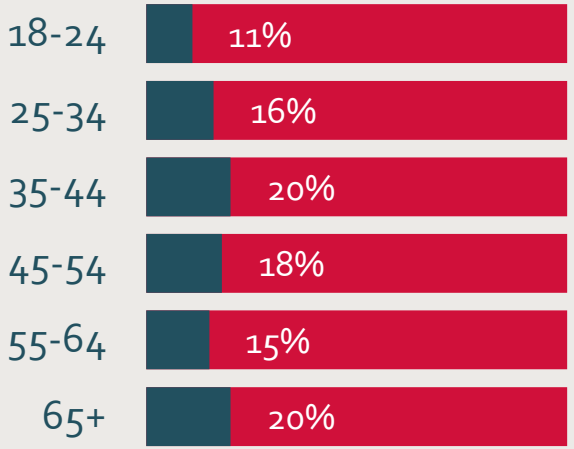
Fieldwork for this research took place between 1st and 6th October 2026. Respondents were asked the following: past experience of adult abuse, whether they personally experienced it or witnessed it, across a range of different types of abuse; and actions taken after personally experiencing or witnessing adult abuse. Note that a total of n=949 respondents opted to answer the adult safeguarding questions.

RED LINE Omnibus Sample Profile

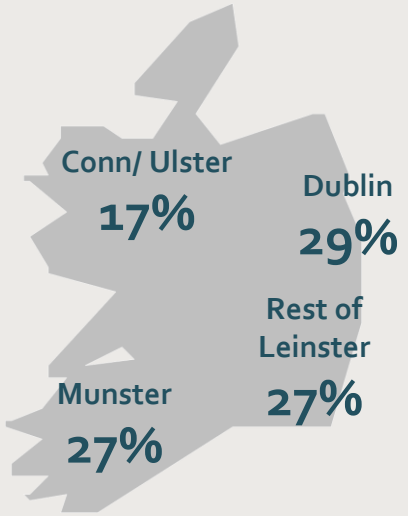
Gender



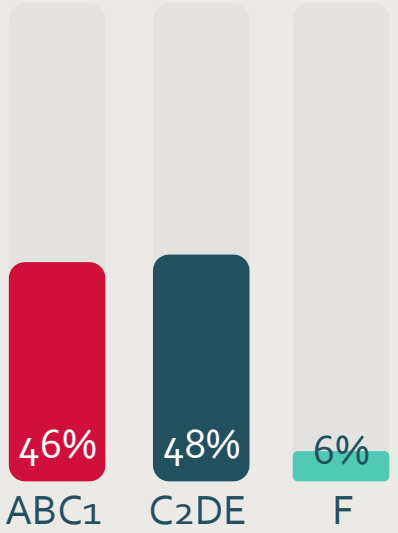
Age



Region



Social Class



Key findings from the research

Adult abuse touches a majority of the population

Adult abuse is not an isolated issue, but something that affects a large part of the population directly or through others.

Psychological and online abuse are the most widespread

Four in ten have experienced or witnessed each, while almost one-third report experience of coercive control.

Women and younger adults are particularly affected

Women are more likely than men to report experience of abuse, while reported experience declines substantially with age.

Informal conversations are more common than formal reports

People generally turn to family, friends or others they trust, while relatively few report abuse to the HSE or Gardaí.

Uncertainty prevents some people from acting

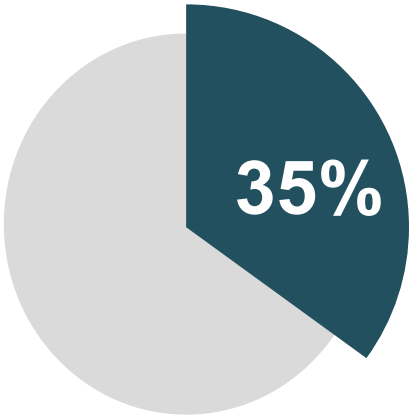
One in five of those who personally experienced abuse did nothing because they did not know what to do.



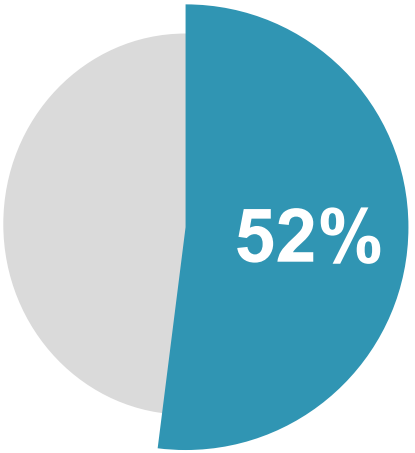


Adult abuse is widespread: almost two-thirds have experienced or witnessed it

TEXT SEEN BY RESPONDENTS: Adult abuse is when a person takes advantage of another, disrespects their independence, does not let their voice be heard; is controlling, violent or aggressive; or takes a person's money without permission. Adult abuse can be subtle, gradual and made to seem 'normal' over time. It can also involve neglect of a person's needs and omitting to provide care. In some cases, it can be very dangerous and serious crime. An increasing type of adult abuse today is online which takes place on the internet or mobile phone. This affects all age groups and types of people.



Personally experienced adult abuse



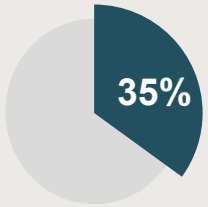
Witnessed someone experience adult abuse

Q1. Have you personally experienced any of the below types of adult abuse, or have you witnessed someone else experience any of these types of abuse?
Base: all persons aged 18+living in ROI choosing to respond; n=949

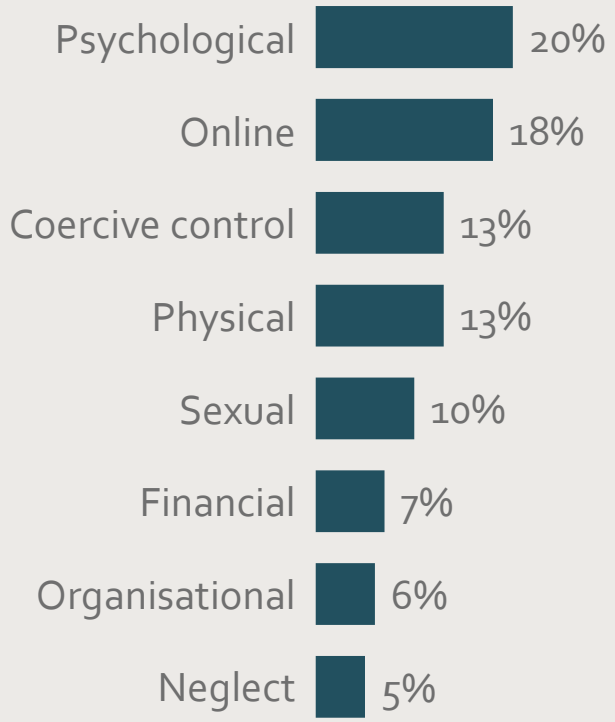
Abuse is often less visible than we might expect

Psychological, online and controlling behaviours come to the fore, showing that people's experience of abuse extends well beyond its more visible physical forms.

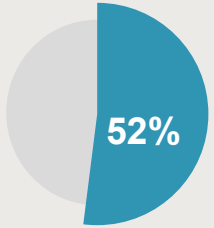
Personally experienced adult abuse



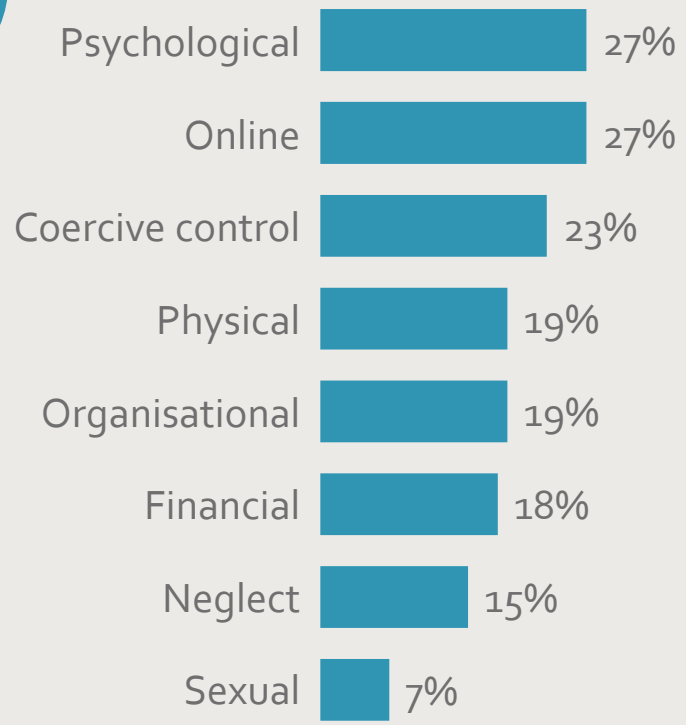
Incidence of different types of abuse personally experienced by people aged 18+ in ROI



Witness someone experience adult abuse



Incidence of witnessing someone experiencing adult abuse by type of abuse amongst people aged 18+ in ROI



Q1. Have you personally experienced any of the below types of adult abuse, or have you witnessed someone else experience any of these types of abuse?
Base: all persons aged 18+living in ROI choosing to respond; n=949

Women are more exposed to adult abuse, particularly at younger ages. The gender gap is evident across different forms of abuse, suggesting women's greater exposure is broad rather than driven by any one type alone.



Personal experience is highest among younger women and falls with age

Age adds another important dimension to the gender pattern, with reported experience generally falling among older adults. This points to particularly high exposure among younger women.

		MEN			WOMEN		
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE	TOTAL	18-34 n=87	35-54 n=148	55+ n=154	18-34 n=116	35-54 n=253	55+ n=190
ANY FORM OF ADULT ABUSE	**35%**	**33%**	**30%**	**21%**	**54%**	**44%**	**29%**
Psychological	20%	14%	15%	8%	37%	28%	16%
Online	18%	23%	20%	13%	28%	15%	14%
Coercive control	13%	8%	11%	4%	26%	15%	13%
Physical	13%	9%	11%	4%	25%	22%	8%
Sexual	10%	4%	4%	1%	29%	17%	9%
Financial	7%	7%	8%	1%	15%	10%	3%
Organisational	6%	3%	6%	2%	16%	7%	3%
Neglect	5%	3%	4%	1%	17%	7%	2%

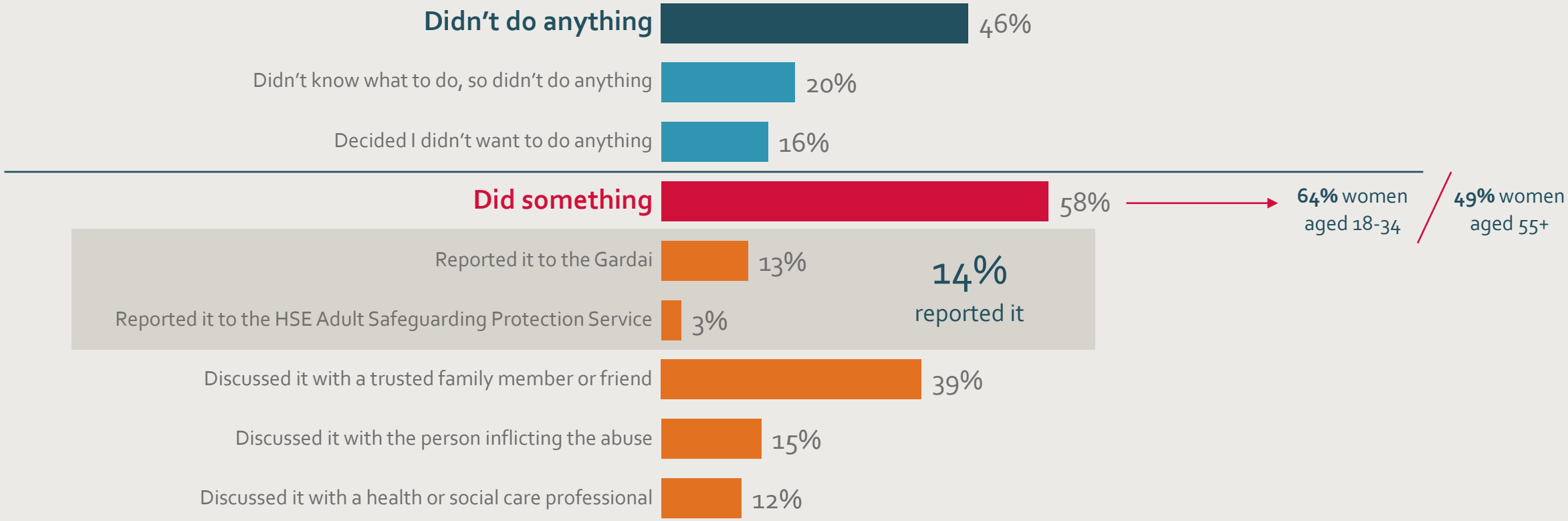
Q1. Have you personally experienced any of the below types of adult abuse, or have you witnessed someone else experience any of these types of abuse?
Base: all persons aged 18+living in ROI choosing to respond; n=949

Recognising abuse does not always lead to action. People are more likely to act when they witness abuse happening to someone else than when they experience it themselves. Informal discussion is much more common than formal reporting, while uncertainty about what to do remains a significant barrier.

Those experiencing abuse often turn to people they trust rather than formal channels

The first response to abuse is more likely to be a personal conversation than a formal report. More concerningly, uncertainty about what to do leaves some people taking no action at all.

What action, if any, taken by people that personally experienced adult abuse

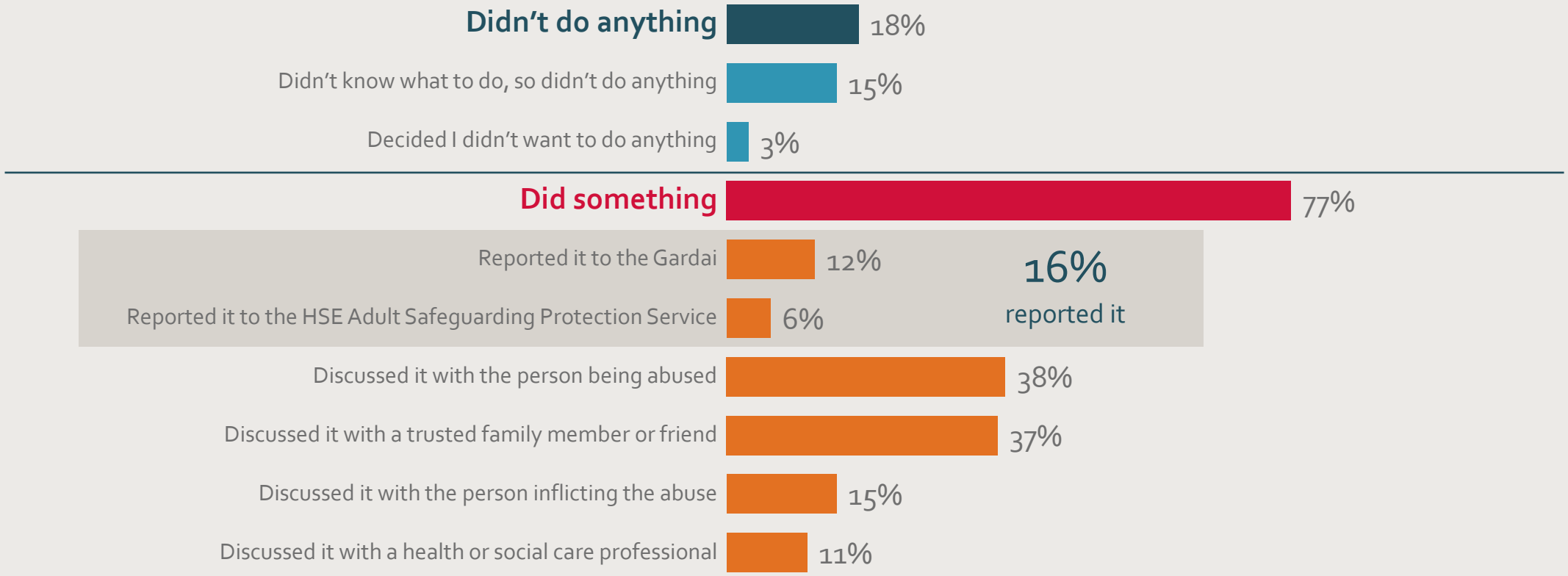


Q.2 Which below describes what you did when you either experienced adult abuse, or witnessed adult abuse occurring to someone else?
Base: people that have personally experienced adult abuse; n=349

It can be easier to act for someone else than for yourself

People are more likely to step in when they witness abuse than when they experience it themselves. This highlights the additional barriers that may make it harder for those experiencing abuse to decide what to do next.

What action, if any, taken by people that witnessed adult abuse happening to others



Q.2 Which below describes what you did when you either experienced adult abuse, or witnessed adult abuse occurring to someone else?
Base: people who have witnessed others experiencing adult abuse; n=496

SEE MORE CLEARLY

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