



non fatal

Strangulation

in domestic abuse

The background of the poster is a solid purple color. In the top left corner, there is a dark blue silhouette of a hand reaching down. In the bottom right corner, there is a light grey silhouette of a person's head and neck in profile, facing right. A dark blue hand is shown strangling the person's neck from behind.

What is **non-fatal strangulation?**

Non-fatal strangulation is a form of domestic abuse and is when a person intentionally puts pressure on the victim's neck to affect their ability to breathe. It is often used to control or intimidate the victim.

Examples of non-fatal strangulation include:



Manual Strangulation

One or two hands
held around
the neck.



Ligature Strangulation

Using a scarf or
belt to tighten
around the neck.



Headlock or Chokehold

Applying pressure
to the neck with
an arm, feet, legs
or other object.

Note:

Non-fatal suffocation occurs when a person uses unlawful force on a victim, whether intentionally or recklessly, that affects the victim's ability to breathe, for example by putting a hand over the victim's mouth or compressing the chest.

What does the law say about non-fatal strangulation?

Non-fatal strangulation and non-fatal suffocation were made specific offences as part of the government's landmark Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and came into force on 7 June 2022.

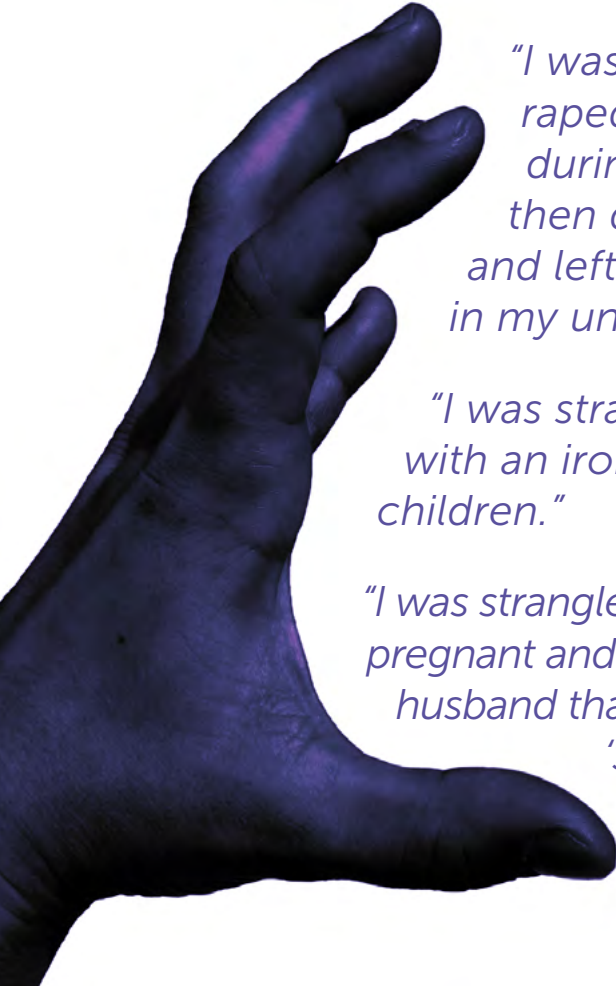
- No physical injuries need be caused for criminal offences to be committed.
- The offences apply in a domestic abuse context, as well as other similar acts carried out in non-domestic situations.
- The criminal offence carries a maximum sentence of five years imprisonment.

However, if the strangulation is racially or religiously aggravated, the maximum sentence increases to seven years.



Cases from the **Muslim Women's Network Helpline**

Women who have contacted the helpline and reported strangulation abuse have varied in age from teenagers to women in their 50s from diverse ethnic backgrounds - Afghan, Arab, Bangladeshi, Black African / Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani and White. Perpetrators have been husbands, boyfriends, fathers and brothers.



"I was strangled and raped by my husband during the night and then dragged by my hair and left outside the house in my underwear."

"I was strangled and hit with an iron in front of my children."

"I was strangled while I was pregnant and told by my husband that I was carrying 'Satan' because I was expecting a girl."

"He put his hands around my neck and applied pressure. I felt paralysed and collapsed after being strangled."

"I was choked by my brother, who also held a knife to my throat and it happened in front of my family."

"My father pushed me onto to the bed and strangled me."

"My boyfriend went crazy and strangled me. I thought I was going to die."

"He used his leg to put pressure on my neck."

MWN Helpline

0800 999 5786



How common is non-fatal strangulation?

Strangulation is common in domestic abuse and the majority of victims are women

Police data

2022-2023: 23,817 offences recorded
(**1437** prosecutions & **700** convictions)
81% victims were women

MWNUK data

The Muslim Women's Network Helpline has improved recording of strangulation abuse. Annually the helpline supports around 1400 women on a range of issues and has found that in:

2023

of the **523**
domestic abuse
victims, **17**
(**3%**) reported
strangulation

2024

of the **553**
domestic abuse
victims, **29**
(**5%**) reported
strangulation

2025
(**Jan-May**)

of the **269**
domestic abuse
victims, **23**
(**9%**) reported
strangulation

Data from other services

- **Women's Aid** - 1 in 4 women accessing their community based and refuge services reported having experienced strangulation or suffocation
- **Safe Lives** - 32% of cases (2021-22) accessing their IDVA services had experienced strangulation
- **St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)** - 19% of people attending their Manchester service had experienced strangulation as part of the assault.

Why is non-fatal strangulation considered as a **warning sign** that the victim may be at **higher risk of being killed or dying by suicide?**

Non-fatal strangulation is a red flag for escalating violence in intimate partner relationships and a possible indicator for future risk of murder or attempted murder.

- According to a US study, victims of domestic abuse are seven times more likely to be murdered by their current or former partner if there has been an incident of non-fatal strangulation beforehand.
- Strangulation or asphyxiation is the second most frequent method of femicide (where women are killed by men) after using a sharp instrument.
- ONS data revealed that, between April 2010 and March 2021, every year on average 18% of female homicide victims in England and Wales were killed by strangulation or suffocation.
- The 2025 Femicide Census (an annual report focusing on homicide cases where women are killed by men in the UK) reported that 27% of killings involved strangulation or asphyxiation.

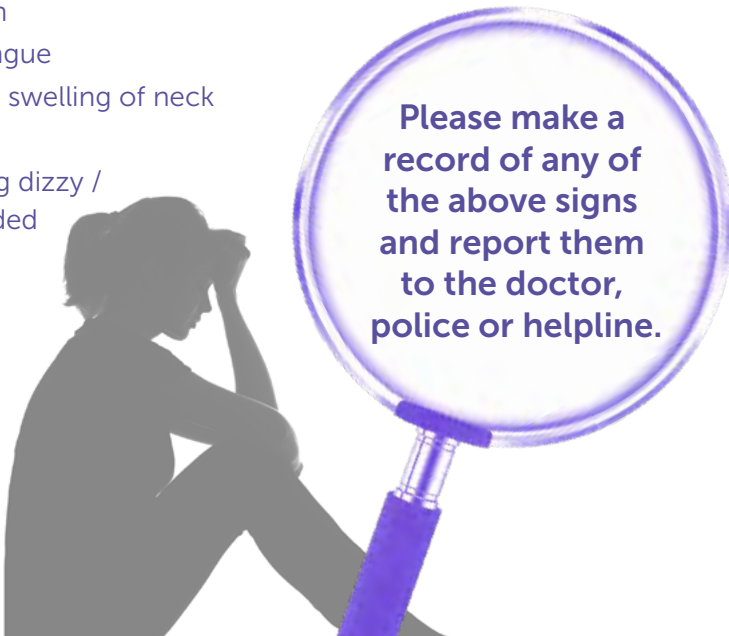
Being a victim of non-fatal strangulation is common in the prior histories of suicides following domestic abuse.

National Police Chiefs' Council Vulnerability and Knowledge Practice Programme (VKPP) report (2024) found that **20%** of suicides following domestic abuse had been subjected to non-fatal strangulation prior to their death.

What are the consequences of non-fatal strangulation?

Strangulation can cause a range of health issues, including stroke, brain injury, and psychological trauma and death. Here is a list of issues that may occur during or after non-fatal strangulation or suffocation:

- Change in vision
- Change in hearing
- Change in voice
- Trouble swallowing
- Drooling
- Speech affected
- Developing a cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Neck pain
- Biting tongue
- Bruising / swelling of neck
- Vomiting
- Becoming dizzy / light headed
- Losing consciousness or blacking out
- Memory affected
- Developing a headache
- Loss of control of urine or stools
- Impact on mental health e.g. flashbacks, anxiety, depression



Please make a record of any of the above signs and report them to the doctor, police or helpline.

What to record about non-fatal strangulation incidents.

It is important to try and record the information below or anything else you feel is relevant.

- Keep a **record** of all health symptoms you experience as highlighted in the previous section
- **Date and time** of incidents
- **Location** of incidents
- **How many times** strangulation / suffocation occurred and **over what period**
- Were there any **witnesses** to the incidents e.g. other family members?
- Did the incidents occur in front of **children**?
- What did the perpetrator **say** while they were strangling you?
- Was the strangulation accompanied by **other forms of abuse** and what was it?
- **How** were you strangled / suffocated e.g. hands over mouth nose, pressure on neck using hands or other object?
- Were you also **sexually assaulted** / raped?
- Were you **pregnant** and did you have abdominal cramps, vaginal discharge, bleeding, miscarriage or early birth
- Did you think you were going to **die** during the incident?



Getting help

Report incident to the police

It is important to understand that strangulation incidents are a risk factor of violence escalating including being killed.

Report symptoms to a health professional

It is important to understand the impact that strangulation may have on your emotional and physical health, and the importance of seeking medical assessment, especially if symptoms increase or change. If you are having suicidal thoughts, it is important to tell someone and seek psychological help.

Report to a helpline

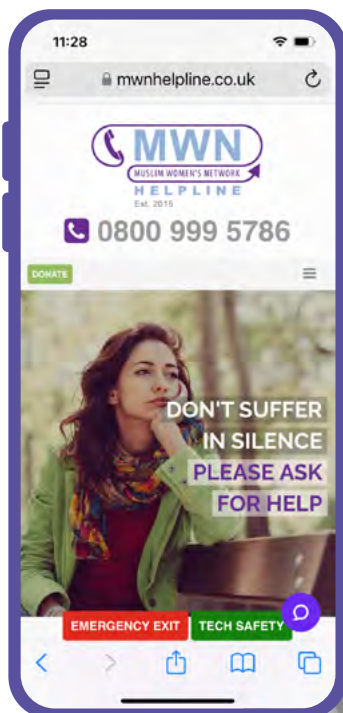
If for any reason you have not contacted the police or health service, you should at least contact a helpline and share the details of any strangulation incidents so they are recorded including any impact of the abuse. If necessary, a helpline can also help you to make a report to the police.

In an emergency contact the police on 999



Non-fatal strangulation in domestic abuse

MWN Helpline



 0800 999 5786

 07415 206 936

 info@mwnhelpline.co.uk

 www.mwnhelpline.co.uk

Amal Safety Mobile Phone App

The Amal Safety App is dedicated to **Fawziyah Javed** who was a victim of domestic homicide. She was murdered by her husband in 2021. Prior to being killed she had experienced incidents where her husband had attempted to suffocate her by covering her head with pillows.



Don't suffer in silence



Please tell someone



MWN UK
Muslim Women's Network UK

www.mwnuk.co.uk