



Domestic Violence Awareness Month & Woman Abuse Prevention Month

RESOURCE GUIDE

NOVEMBER 2023



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History of DVAM/WAPM

October was first declared as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month in 1989. Since then, October has been a time to acknowledge domestic violence survivors and be a voice for its victims. In Canada, Domestic Violence Awareness Month is recognized in the month of November, with October recognizing Women's History Month.

Domestic violence is prevalent in every community, and affects people regardless of age, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, or nationality. Physical violence is often accompanied by emotionally abusive and controlling behavior as part of a much larger, systematic pattern of dominance and control. Domestic violence can result in physical injury, psychological trauma, and even death. The devastating consequences of domestic violence can cross generations and last a lifetime.

Although there has been substantial progress in reducing domestic violence, more than 4 in 10 women have experienced some form of intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime, with women disproportionately experiencing the most severe forms of IPV.



Source: [National Domestic Violence Awareness Month](#)
& [Canadian Women's Foundation](#)



The Scope of Gender-Based Violence Today



More than

4 in 10

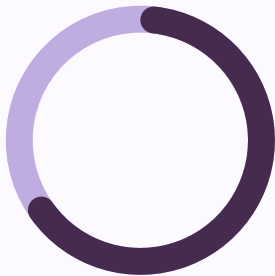
women have experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetimes.



Approximately every

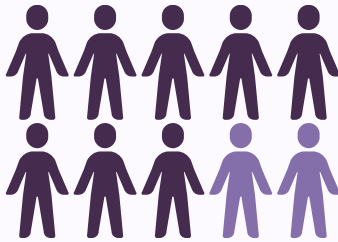
6 days

a woman is killed by her intimate partner.



Two thirds

of people in Canada know a woman who has experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.



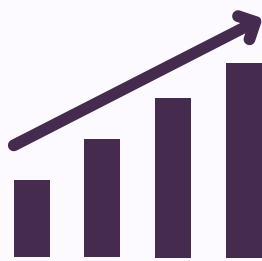
8 in 10

victims of all intimate partner violence incidents are women.

Source: Canadian Women's Foundation



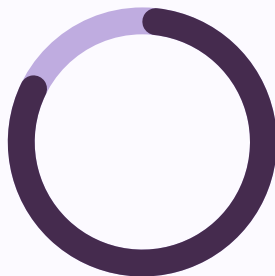
The Scope of Gender-Based Violence Today



Indigenous women and girls are

12x

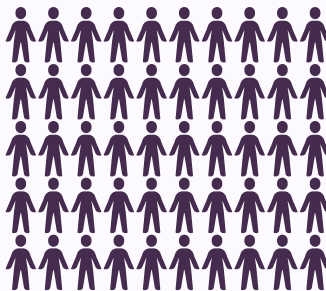
more likely to be murdered or missing than any other woman in Canada, and 16x more likely than white women.



Women account for

84%

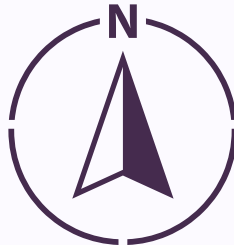
of those who experience sexual violations associated with a cybercrime.



On any given night in Canada

300

women and children are turned away because shelters are already full.



The rate of experiencing violent crime is

4x

higher than Canada's overall population for women and girls living in northern rural and remote areas.

Source: Canadian Women's Foundation



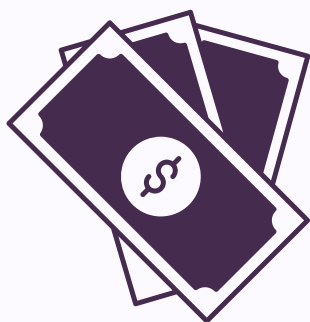
The Scope of Gender-Based Violence Today



Women account for

58%

of senior survivors of sexual violence, and are more likely to experience elder abuse from a family member.



It is estimated that each year

\$7.4 billion

is spent to deal with the aftermath of spousal violence alone.



More statistics about the scope of gender-based violence in Canada are available on the [Canadian Women's Foundation website](#).

Source: [Canadian Women's Foundation](#)

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviour used by one person to gain power and control over another person with whom they have or previously had an intimate relationship.

Domestic violence can include:

- **Physical violence** with the use of hands, objects, or weapons
- **Sexual violence**, including threats, intimidation, physical force, or using a position of power for sexual purposes
- **Emotional abuse, verbal abuse, or psychological intimidation**, including threatening to kill a partner, a child, a pet, or livestock
- **Spiritual abuse**, including using religion to threaten or intimidate, forcing someone to comply with religious beliefs against their will, or preventing someone from practicing their beliefs
- **Financial abuse**, including stealing, controlling finances, forcing a partner to work, or prohibiting a partner from working
- **Harassment and stalking**, including monitoring a partner's activities online, using electronic devices to watch or control them, following them, or consistently invading their privacy
- **Cyber-violence**, including image and video sharing without consent, taking pictures or video without a person's consent, online bullying, harassment, unwanted sexting, and hate speech



Source: [Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services](#)

What Are the Impacts of Domestic Violence?

Anyone can experience domestic violence, regardless of age, race, economic status, religion, sexual orientation or education. Experiences of violence can have short and long term consequences on a survivor's physical and mental health. The following effects have been linked to victims of sexual and physical violence:

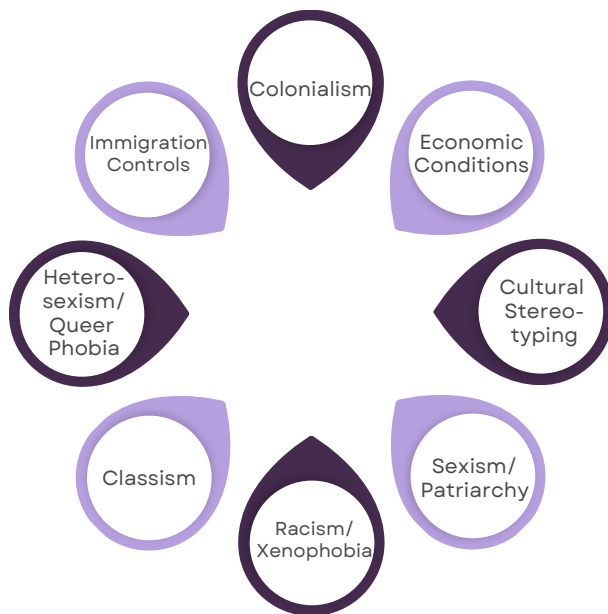
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Ongoing mental health issues, such as PTSD
- Eating disorders
- Disturbances to sleep
- Physical pain such as chronic stomach aches

Ultimately, domestic violence can impact every aspect of a survivor's life including academically, professionally, and socially.



Source: [Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services](#)

Contextualizing Violence Against Women in Canada



Contextualizing violence against women in Canada means that we must consider the impacts that systems of oppression have on the individual. To the left are examples of a few of these systems.

To the right are examples of barriers to reporting domestic violence. This list is not exhaustive, and the reasons for why someone may not report can be much more complex than these examples.



Source: [Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic](#)

Frequently Asked Questions About Domestic Violence

How do you recognize Domestic Violence:

Domestic violence is not always easy to spot. It doesn't always come with physical signs such as bruises or a black eye. Victims may not always be in imminent danger, but rather feel controlled or uncomfortable, be forced into doing something they don't want to do, or be intimidated by their partner, all of which are signs of abuse.

Remember, survivors are strong, capable and perseverant. Help is out there, though, and it's important for survivors to know that they don't have to tackle the healing process alone.

What is sexual abuse/sexual violence?

Sexual abuse is any unwanted sexual contact obtained by force, threats, or when a victim is unable to consent. Overwhelmingly, people who experience sexual abuse/violence report knowing the abuser. This is because sexual abuse is about much more than sex - It's one of many ways an abuser exerts power and control over a partner. Sexual violence can also include many actions such as physical violence, harassment, unsolicited touching, photos, and suggestive language.



More FAQs are available on the [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) website!

Sources: [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org)



Am I experiencing abuse?

It's important to know that domestic violence can take other forms that aren't physical, such as emotional, psychological, sexual, financial, and/or spiritual abuse. DomesticShelters.org has an excellent [toolkit](#) that can help you identify abuse and whether it might be present in your life. Abuse happens to all types of people regardless of age, gender, race, economic or social status, or sexual orientation. Abuse is never the victim's fault, and help is always available.

I'm ready to leave, now what?

When making the decision to escape domestic violence, it can feel impossible to know where to start. There are a variety of things to consider when deciding to leave an abuser, from safety planning, to orders of protection, and everything in-between, the task can feel overwhelming. Remember, domestic violence advocates are available via national and local helplines to help you plan your escape and your future.



*Check out the
Durham Rape Crisis
Centre's Safety
Planning 101
Resource Guide!*

How do I heal after abuse?

After experiencing domestic violence, it may feel impossible to heal. Survivors often experience feelings of guilt and shame after leaving an abuser and may need to work through other emotional, physical, legal, and economic challenges along the way. Survivors are strong, capable, and perseverant, and it's important to remember that you can, and will, move forward.



*Sources: [DomesticShelters.org](#)
& [Durham Rape Crisis Centre](#)*

Meaningful Ways to Support a Survivor of Domestic Violence

Don't Tell Them to "Just Leave"

Leaving is often the most dangerous time for a survivor and it's rarely as simple of a decision as it seems. Only the survivor knows when it's safest to go. Your loved one is dealing with a challenging, possibly life-threatening situation, and your support, love and understanding are essential. It's important they feel empowered to make that choice when they're ready.

Believe Survivors

If your loved one has told you about the abuse, make sure to communicate that you believe them and that you take the abuse seriously. You can say things like "You don't deserve this," "This is not your fault," and "I believe you." When it comes to how to help people experiencing abuse, your support can help them rebuild self-esteem and confidence.

Connect Survivors with Experts and Support

There are people and organizations out there who specialize in helping people like your loved one. You can enter your loved one's postal code here to find local domestic violence advocates or shelters that can offer support. It might also be helpful for your friend to connect with counseling or mental health services so they can process their experience.

Help Survivors Get Ready to Leave

You can help a survivor of domestic violence be prepared to leave when they feel the time is right. Help your friend create a safety plan and put together a safety bag full of the essentials they'll need when they leave. Offer to keep the safety bag for them if they are afraid their partner might find it.



Source: [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org)

Meaningful Ways to Support a Survivor of Domestic Violence

Take Care of Some Details and Logistics

Offering plans and options to help your loved one leave can make a world of difference. Consider offering a ride to work or appointments, providing a place for their pets to stay when they leave, helping with childcare, and/or inviting your loved one to stay with you temporarily. Above all, be sure to ask your loved one how you can support them during this transition.

Assist an Abuse Survivor Financially

It is common for people facing domestic violence to be cut off from sources of income. It can feel impossible for your loved one to consider leaving without financial support. If you have the means, offer to give your loved one money and/or provide them a job opportunity.

Link Survivors with Legal Support

Your loved one may need legal aid, and you can help them get a protection order and connect them with an attorney or legal aid office. If you can afford it, help pay for legal services. You can also accompany them to meetings with their lawyer and to court hearings and proceedings. You can serve as a witness if you have information to share that could help their case.

Try to Be There for Survivors No Matter What

Ask your loved one what you can do to help and remember that what they ask for might not be what you think they need. They may make decisions you disagree with as they decide if, when, and how to leave - support them anyway. Be sure to keep caring for your loved one after they leave. The path to recovery can be long and slow, and being by their side can make it a bit easier.



Source: [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org)

Ways to Stay Active & Engaged After Domestic Violence Awareness Month/Woman Abuse Prevention Month



Wear purple to let survivors and advocates know you support them.



Attend a local event, such as a candlelight vigil, to honour survivors and victims of domestic violence.



Pick up some new reading or listening material to learn about the compelling stories from survivors, advocates, and experts on surviving domestic violence.



Fulfill a need on a shelter's wish list to support shelter clients.



Hold a fundraiser at your place of employment in honour of survivors.



Start and continue the conversation - on social media, at the dinner table, or with peers, being aware of not pressuring anyone to share their experience.



Source: [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org)



Durham Rape Crisis Centre



Information, Resources & Support



24/7 Crisis & Support Line: 905-668-9200



info@drcc.ca



www.drcc.ca