

# Intimate Partner Violence FAQs

## 1. What is intimate partner violence (IPV)?

Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of gender-based violence and includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by an intimate partner(s).

IPV can occur between current or past dating partners, sexual partners, spouses, or cohabiting partners of all sexual orientations and gender identities. It can vary from a single episode of abuse to more chronic and severe violence and controlling behaviour that lasts for years.

IPV affects people of all ages, abilities and all ethnic, racial, religious, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds, and occurs in all types of relationships. While all genders can be perpetrators and/or victims of intimate partner violence, statistics and research indicate that the majority of incidents are perpetrated by men against women.

[More information.](#)

An intimate partner is a person with whom one has a close personal relationship that can be characterized by the following:

- Emotional connectedness
- Regular contact
- Ongoing physical contact and/or sexual behavior
- Identity as a couple
- Familiarity and knowledge about each other's lives

*(Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, [Intimate Partner Violence Definitions](#), 2017)*

## 2. What are the causes of abuse and intimate partner violence?

The causes of abuse are power and control. It is about one or multiple people intentionally exerting power over someone through tactics such as intimidation, emotional abuse, financial manipulation, physical abuse, verbal abuse (including threats), isolation, sexual violence, spiritual violence, or using pets or children to manipulate the individual.

## 3. What are the consequences of abuse?

The consequences of abuse vary. Some include:

- Physical health outcomes: injuries, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, suicide, femicide, death.
- Social consequences: homelessness, isolation from family and friends, poverty, involvement of Children's Aid Society.
- Workforce impact: Loss of employment, inability to concentrate at work (sometimes called presenteeism), absenteeism.
- Impacts on mental health: PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), anxiety, depression, substance use issues, disordered eating/anorexia, bulimia.
- Economic Costs: \$7.4 billion spent on dealing with IPV costs (The Gap in the Gender- Violence Against Women, CCPA, 2013)

#### **4. What is gender-based violence?**

Gender-based violence (GBV) involves the use and abuse of power and control over another person and is perpetrated against someone based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender. Violence against women and girls is one form of gender-based violence. It also has a disproportionate impact on LGBTQQI2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and two-spirit) and gender non-conforming people. (Status of Women Canada, 2017)

#### **5. How is this campaign different than #MeToo or sexual assault movements?**

The #MeToo movement is about raising awareness about sexual violence in the workplace, specifically in relation to actual incidents that have occurred. Sexual assault movements focus on intimate partner violence but they can also focus on sexual harassment and other issues that exist in relation to sexual assault. This campaign focuses specifically on intimate partner violence and how someone close to the person experiencing it can offer support. The resources section includes more information.

#### **6. What about men?**

While statistics show that the majority of survivors of intimate partner violence are women, men can also experience abuse within intimate relationships, including gay, bi, or straight relationships. The focus of this campaign is to support anyone experiencing abuse.

#### **7. Conflicts and fighting are part of relationships. How do I know if someone is experiencing abuse?**

Conflict is a normal aspect of relationships, abusive behaviour is not. You may be unsure if your friend or relative is experiencing 'abuse'. You may have some sense that something is 'wrong' in their relationship. Sometimes there may be signs that indicate

there is abuse, but often there will be nothing obvious. A good place to start can be to ask the person how they are, or finding a way to let them know you are concerned.

### **8. If they don't have bruises, how do I know if it's actually abuse?**

While we often think of abuse as physical, it can also be emotional, psychological, spiritual or financial. This type of abuse leaves no marks or scars but can cause victims to become isolated and experience fear on a daily basis. Sometimes, abuse within a relationship may start with controlling behaviour and then later become physical.

Here are some examples of non-physical abuse:

- Isolating a person from their friends, family, colleagues
- Controlling how they spend their time
- Monitoring social media accounts or using spyware to track their mobile phone and other device
- Controlling how much money they spend or monitoring bank accounts
- Repeated criticism, insults or name-calling of a person by their partner
- Ridiculing or shaming a person for their religious or spiritual beliefs
- Following a person at work, home or in the community

### **9. If someone wants to leave an abusive situation, can't she/he/they just walk away? Why should I get involved?**

There are many barriers to leaving an abusive relationship, depending on the individual. Some common immediate concerns include: where they will live, how they will afford to eat, where their children will go to school, fear of making the abuse worse.

According to Justice Canada, every six days a woman is killed for attempting to leave an abusive relationship. On average, it takes about seven attempts before a woman is able to leave an abusive situation completely.

By talking to someone you think might be experiencing abuse, you may be the help they need to know that they have support.

### **10. What if I make it worse by intervening?**

It is normal to feel as though you may make it worse. The goal is not to put yourself or the person experiencing abuse at risk. Many survivors of abuse say that helpful intervening can include:

- Asking the person if they are okay, when it is safe to do so (i.e. when they are alone)
- Letting them know that "you're here for them"
- Inviting them out to coffee or a meal
- Taking them a meal

- Saying hi to them when you see them on the street
- Calling them to chat if you haven't seen them in a while

We have included resources that can further support you on how to be a supportive bystander.

### **11. What if children are involved? What should I do?**

Intimate partner violence can have an impact on children. The law says that anyone who thinks that a child is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, must report it to a Children's Aid Society (CAS). If a person is attempting to flee an abusive situation with their children, you can support them by connecting them with a local family shelter. The resources include a list of organizations/agencies that can support someone through the process of fleeing abuse with children.

### **12. Shouldn't I just call the police if I witness intimate partner violence?**

If someone is in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.