

WOMAN ABUSE FACT SHEET

Woman Abuse is a widespread societal problem. It is a form of power and control. Woman abuse can take many forms. Women from all age groups, racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, socio-economic classes, religions, ability levels, and professions experience abuse.

Forms of Abuse

Verbal Abuse:

insults shouting, swearing, put-downs, and degrading language.

Emotional Abuse:

threatening behaviour (i.e. threats to harm or murder the woman and/or children, threats to take away the children, threats to commit suicide and/or murder suicide).

Psychological Abuse:

inducing fear, accusations, excessive suspicion of the woman's actions, isolating, and undermining a woman's self-esteem.

Financial Abuse:

controlling the family finances to disempower the woman.

Spiritual Abuse:

degrading one's spiritual beliefs, withholding means to practice, forcing adherence to a belief system.

Sexual Abuse:

any act of a sexual nature that is unwanted. It may include touching, forcing the woman to participate in sexual practices that the woman finds offensive or degrading, and rape.

Physical Abuse:

slapping, shoving, hitting, torture, stabbing, beating, assault with a weapon, and/or murder.

Criminal Harassment (Stalking):

persistently following someone, harassing telephone calls, threatening someone.

Statistics

- 1 in 4 women will experience abuse in an intimate relationship in their lifetime (Statistics Canada, 1993).
- 38% of sexually assaulted women were assaulted by their husbands, common-law partners, or boyfriends (Canadian Panel on violence Against Women, 1993).
- 21% of women abused in an intimate relationship are abused during pregnancy (Canadian Institute of Child Health Profile, 1994).
- 40% of women with disabilities have been or are in an abusive relationship (DAWN, 1992).
- Only 26% of woman abuse incidents are reported to the police (Statistics Canada, 1993).
- In an average year, 78 women are killed by their husbands or partners (Statistics Canada, 1996).

**Woman abuse is never
acceptable**

Impact on Women

Women that have experienced abuse are likely to be impacted emotionally, physically, socially, and financially. It may affect work and intimate relationships. Some women may face additional problems related to child-care, housing, and poverty. Immigrant and refugee women may face specific problems, such as racism, language barriers, isolation, lack of experience accessing social services, low economic status, immigration policies and fear of the criminal justice system.

*This Fact Sheet was developed by the **Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse**, through the generous funding of **the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services**. For more information, please contact us at (905) 282-9792.*

Myths and Realities

Myth: Women could leave their abusive partners if they wanted to.

Reality: A woman stays in an abusive relationship for many reasons, none of which is because she wants to be abused. Some of the reasons can include:

- Fear for her safety and her children's safety.
- Financial dependence.
- No place to go.
- May not want to break up the family.
- Hopes that the relationship will get better.
- Partner has threatened to harm her if she leaves.

Myth: Women often provoke abuse and deserve what they get.

Reality: No woman ever deserves to be abused.

Children Exposed to Woman Abuse

Children exposed to woman abuse see, hear, and are aware of violence against their mother. They may see, hear, or know about incidents that range from verbal, emotional, psychological, spiritual, sexual, financial, and physical abuse. Their environment may cause them to feel tense, anxious, and fearful. In Canada, it is estimated that 800,000 children are exposed to woman abuse each year.

When children see their mother being abused by her partner, they may learn that: violence is okay; violence is a way to resolve conflict; violence is an effective way to gain power and control over others; violence is a normal part of a relationship. Children may be affected on many levels; emotionally, physically, socially, psychologically, financially, and spiritually. Children exposed to woman abuse have an increased chance of being abused and/or abusive as an adult.

Children witnessed violence against their mothers in almost 40% of violent marriages.

What To Do If You Are Experiencing Woman Abuse

- You are not alone. You are not responsible for what happened.
- Develop a safety plan. Write down a list of emergency numbers. Keep personal belongings somewhere safe. Keep a bag of items if you need to escape quickly.
- Contact services in your area for more information on your options, and to get support.
- Talk to someone about your legal options.
- Consider reporting to the police, applying for a restraining order, or peace bond.
- Get support from supportive people in your life, or contact services for individual and/or group counselling and/or call a crisis line.

How You Can Support Someone Experiencing Woman Abuse

- Believe her.
- Listen and let her talk about her feelings.
- Give clear messages (i.e. violence is never acceptable).
- Encourage her to make her own decisions. Respect her choices.
- Talk with her about what she can do to plan for hers and her children's safety.
- Help her find community services that can support her and provide practical help (i.e. counselling, assistance with housing, financial aid, legal matters).

There are many services available for women and their children to help them deal with abuse:

24-Hour Crisis Lines:

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| <i>Assaulted Women's Help Line</i> | 1-866-863-0511 |
| <i>Caledon/Dufferin Victim Services</i> | 1-888-743-6496 |
| <i>Distress Centre Peel</i> | 905-278-7028 |
| <i>Family Transition Place</i> | 1-800-265-9178 |
| <i>Interim Place I</i> | 905-271-1860 |
| <i>Interim Place II</i> | 905-676-8515 |
| <i>Salvation Army Family Life</i> | |
| <i>Resource Centre</i> | 905-451-6108 |
| <i>Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Centre</i> | 905-273-9442 |
| <i>Tele-Care Brampton</i> | 905-459-7777 |
| <i>Victim Services of Peel</i> | 905-568-1068 |