

Most people who experience IPV turn to family, friends, neighbours, spiritual advisors, and other community members for support instead of accessing formal services like counseling. A shortage of culturally sensitive services is a barrier to accessing help for IPV. Believing people's experiences of IPV and recognizing their experiences as violence will prevent them from blaming or isolating themselves, and encourage them to seek support again.

We can end IPV in our communities through information and empowerment-by supporting each other and developing skills to recognize and respond to IPV. We can model healthy relationships and conflict resolution. We can mentor community members, especially youth, in communication skills and building healthy relationships. Working together can make our communities healthier, safer, and stronger.



**AFRICA  
CENTRE**



For more information on this project please visit our website:

<https://africacentre.ca/enhancing-gender-equity/>

or

<https://pran-network.ca/knowledge-mobilization/tools/>

For more information on our programs or to get involved please contact us via email at [gender.equity@africacentre.ca](mailto:gender.equity@africacentre.ca)

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# What is IPV?

Intimate Partner Violence



Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada

All communities, regardless of race or culture, are impacted by Intimate Partner Violence. Violence fractures communities, but empowered and informed community members can create empowered and informed communities. Working together, we can make our communities healthier, safer, and stronger.

### **What is IPV?**

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), also called domestic violence or spousal violence, is a pattern of abusive behaviours within an intimate or romantic relationship. One partner uses abusive behaviours or tactics to control or gain power over their partner. We often think of violence as physical in nature, but IPV can also be sexual, financial, psychological, and emotional.

Some examples of **physical abuse**:

- hitting, slapping, pushing, and choking.

Some examples of **sexual abuse**:

- forcing your partner to engage in unwanted sexual activity (touching, kissing, penetration) and refusing to practice safe sex (like wearing a condom).

Some examples of **financial (economic) abuse**:

- stopping your partner from getting a job, not letting your partner have access to family income, and destroying your partner's belongings.

Psychological abuse attempts to alter or manipulate the way someone thinks.

An example of **psychological abuse** is gaslighting.

Some examples of **emotional abuse**:

- calling your partner names, treating your partner as beneath you, threatening to harm yourself/others, threatening to have your partner deported, shifting blame, stalking, or using technology to track and/or monitor your partner.<sup>1</sup>

In Canada, police-reported data suggests that dating partner violence is more prevalent than spousal (marital) violence. Among youth aged 15-24 experience the highest rate of dating violence at a rate of 520 victims per 100,000.<sup>2</sup>

### **IPV and African, Caribbean, and Black Communities**

While IPV exists in all communities, we know that factors like racism, ageism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination make it harder for certain victim-survivors to access help or support. For newcomers to Canada, resettlement may deprive them of the kind of support systems they had in their countries of origin. Families may grapple with changes in family dynamics and shifts in gender roles during resettlement. Many might fear deportation if they disclose violence in their homes. Immigrant women may become economically dependent on their partners because of deskilling or underemployment. This dependency can make it impossible for them to report violence.

<sup>1</sup> Community Initiatives Against Family Violence. (2020, March 16). Our definition of family violence. Community Initiatives Against Family Violence. <https://ciafv.com/about-us/our-definition-of-fv/>; Domestic Violence Awareness Project. (2018). Helping to End Domestic Violence. Harrisburg, PA; National Resource Centre on Domestic Violence. <https://vawnet.org/sites/default/files/assets/files/2018-10/NRCDV-HelpingEndDV%28English%29-Sept2018.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada (2012). Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, no. 85-002-X. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Ministry of Industry, 2012.

### **Role of Systems**

Broader social structures — like patriarchy— normalize male dominance over women, which normalizes IPV in many ways. Racism also facilitates IPV. In North America, there are many harmful myths about Black men and women. Often, Black women are characterized as strong and capable of withstanding all trauma and therefore not needing support or care. Black men are characterized as dangerous or prone to violence. People experiencing IPV might fear that talking about IPV will cause more violence in their communities through racism and increased surveillance, or that official support services may blame their culture. However, IPV affects all communities and all people deserve support and care.

### **Impact**

IPV affects mental health — people who experience IPV might struggle with depression, anxiety, or suicide. Children who grow up exposed to IPV struggle in school, with anxiety and sleep difficulties, might engage in aggressive behaviors, and can struggle with conflict resolution. IPV contributes to family dysfunction and the breakdown of families. People who engage in abusive behaviours might feel shame and have difficulty accessing support to change their behaviour. Women who experience IPV may experience poor mental health, which then impacts their parenting. IPV may impact employment stability, thus impacting the family's finances. It may also lead to exposure to the legal system or the removal of children from the home.