

# IPV Overview

## An introduction to Intimate Partner Violence in Canada



### Overview

#### Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Violence (or abuse) perpetrated by intimate partners can take many forms, including physical abuse, sexual assault, emotional abuse, financial abuse, and social isolation (Wathen et al., 2025). These behaviours are often intended to gain power and control over a partner.

#### IPV Severity for Women

Women sustain the most serious and severe forms of IPV, including strangulation, assaults, sexual assaults, and threats with weapons. Women also experience assaults more frequently, with nearly one-third reporting 10 or more incidents of abuse over their lifetime (Burczycka, 2016; Cotter, 2021).

#### Indigenous Women and Girls

IPV is more frequent and severe for Indigenous women and girls, with almost 60% reporting some form of IPV in their lifetime (Heidinger, 2021).

#### Impacts of IPV on Survivors

Intimate partner violence can cause a wide range of physical injuries, including bruises, cuts, broken bones, and damage to the head, neck, and face. Over time, repeated violence can also lead to chronic pain, brain injury, and long-term health problems that affect daily life (Nemeth et al., 2023; St. Ivany & Schminkey, 2016).

### Intimate Partner Violence and Traumatic Brain Injury

- Between 60% and 92% of abused women will incur a brain injury as a direct result of their partner's physical violence (St. Ivany & Schminkey, 2016).
- Male partners often perpetrate repeated violence against their female partners, frequently striking the head, neck, and face (Adhikari et al., 2024; Cotter, 2021). The chronic and targeted nature of this violence increases survivors' vulnerability to brain injury and suggests that many of the challenges they face may stem from structural or functional alterations to the brain (Smirl et al., 2019).
- Women who report both IPV and TBI are more likely to report central nervous system symptoms (such as headaches, dizziness, or trouble concentrating), which are often mistaken for mental health or substance use problems (Campbell et al., 2018).
- Survivors who are strangled by their partners/ex-partners have a dramatically higher risk of a brain injury—2.24 times more than those who did not report strangulation (Adhikari et al., 2024).

### Intersectional Impact

Young women, Indigenous women, LGBTQ + women, women with disabilities, and racialized women in Canada are more likely to experience IPV (Women & Gender Equality Canada, 2024). The issue is especially prevalent in the Canadian Prairies, which consistently report the highest provincial rates of IPV—particularly in rural, remote, and Northern communities (Rotenberg, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2021).

*This document was developed with the assistance of AI (OpenAI's ChatGPT) for drafting and phrasing, based on our literature review findings.*

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