

IPV-TBI Overview

An Introduction to Partner-Inflicted Traumatic Brain Injury in Canada



Brain Injury

A brain injury is defined as a sudden alteration in brain function that disrupts normal functioning (Menon et al., 2010).

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

A type of brain injury caused by something **outside of the body**, while a non-traumatic brain injury is caused by a health issue within the body (for more information visit [Brain Injury Canada, 2020](#)).

Causes and Symptoms of TBI

TBI can be caused by assault, combat injuries, motor vehicle accidents, sports injuries, falls, shaken baby syndrome, and **intimate partner violence** (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2024).

Symptoms include: neck pain, loss of consciousness, confusion, severe headaches, repeated vomiting, unusual behavioural changes, seizures, double vision, weakness/tingling in limbs.

Prevalence of TBI

- TBI is a leading cause of disability worldwide - it is more prevalent than breast cancer, spinal cord injury, HIV/AIDS, and multiple sclerosis combined (Haag et al., 2019).
- In Canada, approximately 2% of the population lives with a TBI (Brain Injury Canada, 2023).
- **Between 60% and 92% of abused women will get a brain injury as a direct result of their partner's physical violence** (St. Ivany & Schminkey, 2016).

TBI and Intimate Partner Violence

General Facts

Many IPV survivors will incur a brain injury as a direct result of their partner's physical violence (St. Ivany & Schminkey, 2016).

Certain populations are more likely to be impacted by both IPV and TBI: young women, Indigenous women, LGBTQ+ women, women with disabilities, and racialized women (Women & Gender Equality Canada, 2024).

Nature of Injury

Some male partners **perpetrate violence repeatedly** against their female partners and **over a sustained period of time** (Cotter, 2021).

Perpetrators often strike women's heads, necks, and faces (Adhikari, Maldonado-Rodriguez, et al., 2024). The mechanism of injury and increased trauma to these areas make survivors of IPV much more likely to sustain a brain injury.

Impacts on Survivors

These injuries frequently go unnoticed and untreated and can lead to chronic impairment and premature death. They can hinder a survivor's ability to work, care for children, and manage daily responsibilities (St. Ivany & Schminkey, 2016).

TBI can make it more difficult for survivors to leave abusive relationships and access safety, justice, healthcare, and social services—even years after the abuse (Nemeth et al, 2023).

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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