



Intimate Partner Violence



REFERENCES

What is Intimate Partner Violence?

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines intimate partner violence (IPV) as “behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors.”¹

IPV can happen at any time during a relationship or even after it has ended, regardless of the gender and sexual orientation of the partners, cohabitation, sexual intimacy, or status, and it can happen in private, public, or online.² While IPV impacts individuals of all races, ages, gender, educational, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, women experience it at a higher rate than men, with eight out of ten IPV victims being female.³

While there have been improvements to Ontario Regulation 131/16 of the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act** in strengthening protection for post-secondary students subjected to harassment and sexual violence, IPV and support accessibility is still a topic of concern. A survey of Ontario university and college students about sexual violence indicated that only around 22% of university respondents and 30% of college respondents had the knowledge and understanding of reporting procedures and how/where to access support on campus.⁴ Research indicates that a considerable proportion of Canadian female first-year students already arrive on campus with a history of sexual violence and are unprepared to face perpetrators during their post-secondary academic career, highlighting the need for campuses to provide support for these individuals.⁵

Stay-at-home orders, social isolation, and economic pressures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as lack of housing support (i.e., assistance to obtain housing/live independently), have increased IPV cases and have damaging consequences for individuals who face IPV in restricting their access to shelters and campus services.^{6,7}

As of 2024, over 90 Ontario municipalities have declared IPV as an epidemic.⁸ [Bill 173](#), the *Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act*, indicates that the Ontario government will recognize IPV as an epidemic in Ontario.

Since relationships exist on a spectrum, it can sometimes be hard to spot the signs of when a relationship goes from healthy to unhealthy, from safe to dangerous. IPV is stereotypically viewed as strictly physical violence, but it often can be much more subtle than that and not include other forms of abuse. There is no threshold of violence or discomfort you need to reach before seeking support. If it feels wrong to you, ask for help.

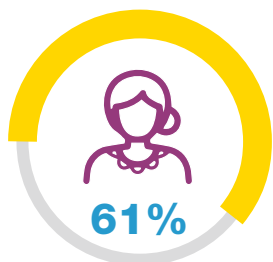
*We acknowledge that the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities has been renamed to Ministry of Colleges and University. Ontario Regulation 131/16 falls under their old title.

Typical warning signs of an abusive partner include⁹:

- ⊗ Explosive outbursts or mood swings.
- ⊗ Isolating you from friends or family.
- ⊗ Manipulating your spiritual beliefs to justify a controlling or abusive behaviour.
- ⊗ Threatening you, your loved ones, and/or friends.
- ⊗ Possessiveness/controlling behaviour (e.g., what you wear, where you can go, money).
- ⊗ Continuously minimizing your feelings.
- ⊗ Checking your phone, email, and accounts without your permission.
- ⊗ Any type of physical aggression or verbal abuse.

Intersectionality

“Without intersectionality, we only get part of the picture and partial pictures limit us to partial responses for survivors.” ¹⁰ – Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University



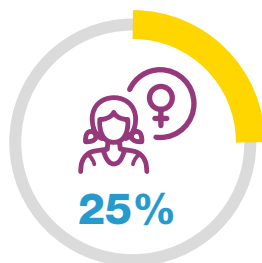
Indigenous women are more likely to experience IPV (61%) than compared to non-Indigenous women (44%).²



Close to 1 in 3 men who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ report physical and/or sexual IPV in their lifetime.¹¹



More than 50% of women with disabilities* have reported experiencing IPV, compared to 37% of women without a disability.²



Around 25% of Canadian women who are part of a visible minority have reported experiencing IPV between the ages of 15 and 24.²



67% of 2SLGBTQ+ women who have been in an intimate partner relationship have reported experiencing at least one type of IPV since the age of 15, compared to 44% among heterosexual women.²

*this includes sensory, mental-health related, cognitive, and physical disabilities

How Does IPV Impact Student Mental Health?

IPV can produce various short- and long-term problems such as^{1,12,13}:

- Psychological distress.
- Depression and anxiety.
- Post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Negative academic impacts.
- Suicidal behaviour.
- Phobias and panic disorder.
- Increased substance use.
- Poor overall health.
- Eating disorders.
- School disengagement.
- Psychosomatic disorders.
- Self-harm.

Alongside, feelings of guilt, shame, humiliation, loss, and lack of control are common feelings among those who experience IPV, further contributing to depression and poor self-esteem.¹²



These tips can help keep yourself or someone you know safe during an incident of IPV.

- Know your surroundings and be aware of all exit locations.
- Always have your phone near you.¹⁴
- If you sense an argument brewing between you and your abusive partner, attempt to move it to a space that has more than one exit.¹⁴
- Keep emergency contacts, hotlines, and services under code names in your cellphone.¹⁴
- Keep records of every incident that occurs with your partner, documenting dates, times, injuries (with photos if possible), what was said, and descriptions of the incident(s).¹⁴
- Other types of records include printing out text messages, emails, social media posts, call logs, and recording voicemails of abuse.
- Create a code word to send to friends and family when in need of help.
- Keep your wallet and car keys in easily accessible places.



IPV Resources

➤ Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children (CREVAWC)

Western University offers free online training regarding IPV. Trainings include how to respond to disclosures of sexual violence on Ontario campuses, training for neighbours, friends, and families, and tips on risk assessment and management.

CREVAWC also provides a series of [infographics](#) on IPV regarding diverse groups and populations.

➤ CICMH Sexual Violence Response on Campus Toolkit

This CICMH toolkit provides campus stakeholders with the necessary information to help improve or develop sexual violence response programming. The toolkit also touches upon the mental health impacts of sexual violence and provides examples of best and promising practices of sexual violence responses in post-secondary institutions.

➤ iHEAL App

Backed by the Public Health Agency of Canada, collaboration between Western University, University of New Brunswick, and University of British Columbia worked to develop this free anonymous app to support women experiencing IPV and domestic violence. iHEAL provides users with resources and services in their local area to improve their health, safety, and well-being. A short informational video on the app can be found [here](#).

➤ Hope for Wellness

Available in many languages (English, French, Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut), Hope for Wellness has a telephone line and online chat available 24/7, with culturally competent counsellors for all Indigenous people across Canada. Hope for Wellness is available for crisis intervention, referrals to community-based services, and emotional support. Toll-free Help Line: 1-855-242-3310

➤ Love is Respect

This American-based website provides education and resources surrounding healthy and unhealthy relationships and personal safety.

➤ The Culture of Respect: CORE Blueprint Program

This report highlights a pilot project launched in the USA regarding post-secondary institutions' responses to and prevention of campus sexual violence.