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Intimate partner violence has been declared an epidemic in Durham Region

The message is clear that gender-based violence will not be tolerated. Bethesda House, Herizon House, Luke's Place Support & Resource Centre for Women & Children, CFSD, The Denise House, Victim Services of Durham Region, WMRCC of Durham, YWCA Durham are fighting the fight.

IPV refers specifically to violence and aggression between intimate partners. IPV can include physical, sexual or psychological abuse or stalking. Acts of IPV range in how often they occur or how violent they are. It can happen to women or men who have intimate relationships with women, men or both.

The World Health Organization identifies IPV as a major global public health concern, as it affects millions of people and can result in immediate and long-lasting health, social and economic consequencesFootnote 1 . IPV impacts people of all genders, ages and socioeconomic, racial, educational, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. However, women experience this form of gender-based violence at much higher rates, most often perpetrated by menFootnote 2 . IPV can occur in both public and private spaces, as well as online. When children are exposed to IPV, it is considered a form of child maltreatment.

IPV can happen: within a marriage, common-law or dating relationship - regardless of the gender and sexual orientation of the partners- at any time during a relationship and even after it has ended - whether or not partners live together or are sexually intimate with one another

IPV can include: coercive control - criminal harassment - stalking - emotional/psychological abuse - economic abuse - physical abuse - reproductive coercion - sexual violence - spiritual abuse - technology-facilitated violence (also referred to as cyberviolence)

Impacts

The impacts of intimate partner violence can be extremely severe and long-lasting. Harms resulting from IPV may be:

Physical, including: minor to severe injury - short and long-term health conditions stress-related illness - death

Psychological/emotional, including: mental health consequences (ie. depression and anxiety/PTSD) - experiences of shame, stress, and fear - costs to social standing — professional consequences -legal support

It is common for people who have experienced IPV to suffer mental health consequences. A 2018 survey found that 12% of young women aged 15-24 who had experienced IPV, reported symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)Footnote 2 . Other research found that 36% of women in Canadian shelters for victims and survivors of abuse, noted mental health issues as one of the top challenges they facedFootnote 3 .

How to respond

If you experience or witness IPV, there are ways you can respond.

If you are experiencing IPV, you can: talk to someone you trust - contact the police - get help from local victim services

If you witness someone else experiencing IPV, you can: reach out to them and offer resources - report the incident to authorities- talk about it with someone you trust

Police-reported data shows that women are overrepresented among those who experience IPV, including among victims of intimate partner homicides. Despite its severe impacts, most cases of IPV are not reported.

In 2019, 80% of people who had experienced IPV did not report it to the police (women reported 22% of the time, and men 14% of the timeFootnote 4).

Violence was more likely to come to the attention of the police in situations where there was a higher frequency of abuse, such as on a monthly basis or more (13%), compared with those who had experienced IPV once (2%) or a few times (5%)Footnote 5 .

Similarly to other forms of violence, those who experience IPV often don't report it to the police for a variety of reasons. According to self-reported data, the most common reasons provided by victims/survivors for not reporting their experience of intimate partner violence to the police are: the belief that abuse is a private or personal matter, and the perception that the incident is not important enough to reportFootnote 6 .

Other reasons may include:

fear of stigma/shameFootnote 7, fear of court system intervention, or lack of trust in the criminal justice systemFootnote 8 .

In 34% of cases, people who have experienced IPV don't speak to anyone about the violence that they experienced, let alone report it.

Self-reported data

44% of women and girls who had ever been in an intimate partner relationship—or about 6.2 million women aged 15 and over —reported experiencing some kind of psychological, physical, or sexual abuse in the context of an intimate relationship in their lifetime (since the age of 15)Footnote 5 .

Women and girls were significantly more likely than men and boys to have experienced any form of IPV, including physical abuse (23% versus 17%, respectively), sexual abuse (12% versus 2%), and psychological abuse (43% versus 35%)Footnote 5 .

Women, relative to men, were considerably more likely to have experienced the most severe forms of IPV in their lifetime (since the age of 15): being made to perform sex acts they did not want to perform (8% versus 1%, respectively), being confined or locked in a room or other space (3% versus 0.5%), being forced to have sex (10% versus 2%), being choked (7% versus 1%), and having harm or threats of harm directed towards their pets (4% versus 0.8%)Footnote 5a .

Among people who experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime (since the age of 15), women are about four times more likely than men (37% versus 9%, respectively) to have ever been afraid of a partner.

55% of women who experienced physical or sexual IPV feared a partner at some point. Being afraid of a partner can indicate intimate partner violence that is more coercive, more severe, and more likely to reflect a pattern of abusive behavioursFootnote 5 .

Women with a history of physical or sexual abuse before the age of 15 were about twice as likely as women with no such history to have experienced IPV either since age 15 (67% versus 35%) or in the past 12 months (18% versus 10%)Footnote 5 .

Among people who experienced IPV in the 12 months preceding the survey, women were twice as likely as men to have experienced at least one form of IPV on a daily or almost daily basis (12% versus 6%, respectively)