

A Workplace Toolkit

What Is Family Violence?

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide an overview of family violence and some definitions that employers should know. Many people believe that family violence is only physical abuse. However, family violence takes many different forms. It may also be psychological, sexual, financial or spiritual.

- **Physical Abuse** includes hitting, pinching, slapping, pushing, punching, kicking, burning, stabbing or shooting. It may also include threats to cause harm.

- **Psychological Abuse** (sometimes referred to as emotional or verbal abuse) includes put-downs, name calling, jealousy, isolation from family and friends, and threats to leave the relationship or to commit suicide if the victim does not co-operate.

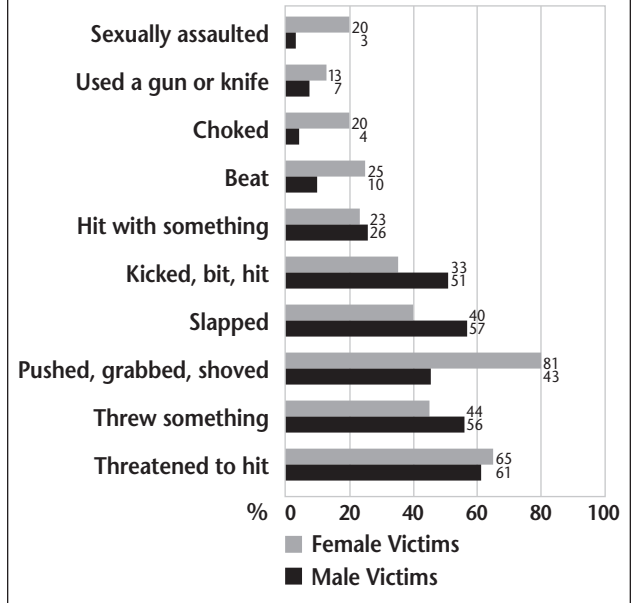
- **Sexual Abuse** includes unwanted touching or sexual activity. It may include control over birth control, forced pregnancies or abortions and transmission of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD).

- **Financial Abuse** occurs when an individual uses finances to control another individual. This could include forcing a person to hand over all or part of their salary or by denying someone access to their own finances.

- **Spiritual Abuse** occurs when an individual uses religious or spiritual matters to control another, such as forcing another to follow a particular faith or give up their religion.

Graph A below shows the most common types of spousal assaults and their differential impact on men and women in 1999.

Graph A
Types of spousal violence experienced by women and men, 1999



Source: Statistics Canada, 1999 GSS

Family Violence

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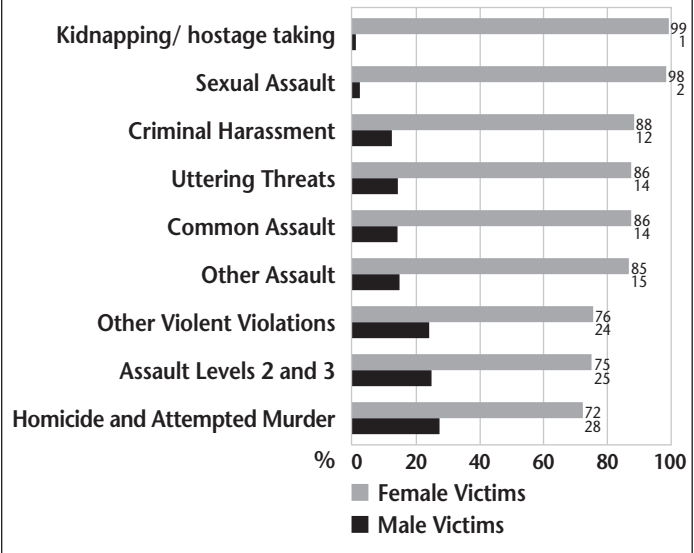
All forms of abuse are wrong! Many are against the law

Family violence can happen to anyone. Persons with disabilities, women, men, youth, seniors, and same sex partners may be coping with abuse and violence. Victims of family violence come from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Regardless of gender or relationship status, family violence is characterized by a power imbalance, where one person tries to control another. The aggressor often uses intimidation, fear and abuse to maintain that control.

The Family Violence Survey conducted by Statistics Canada in 2000 found that 8% of women and 7% of men contacted in a telephone survey claimed to have experienced some form of violence in a personal relationship over the past five years.

Although anyone can be a victim of family violence, some people, such as persons with disabilities, are more vulnerable to abuse than others. Graph B below shows that in a spousal relationship, women are the most likely to experience violence, especially severe, negative consequences such as kidnapping, stalking and murder.

Graph B
Women victims the majority in all types of spousal violence, 2000



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