

# Men Abused by Their Partners

## Who this is for

This fact sheet is for you if:

- you are a man who is concerned for your safety and/or depressed because your female partner is mistreating you, and
- you are wondering if your partner's actions are abuse.

In this fact sheet, **partner** means the female person who you are or were married to, you live or lived with in a marriage-like relationship, or you have a child with.

## You are not alone

If you are a man who is experiencing abuse from your female partner, you are not alone. This type of abuse is not uncommon but is not widely discussed or reported. It takes courage for you to acknowledge and report it. You can find more information on this topic at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/publications/mlintima-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/publications/mlintima-eng.php). Studies show that men at greater risk of experiencing abuse include younger men, Aboriginal men, men in common-law relationships, and men whose partners have high levels of conflict and stress in other areas of life.

## What abuse means

Abuse in relationships includes behaviour ranging from threats to physical or sexual assault. It may also include emotional, verbal, and financial actions that are harmful.

A man is abused when a woman uses abuse or violence to gain power and control over him. Often, the abuser blames the abuse on the victim. Remember that abuse is the abuser's fault. *Abuse against you is not your fault.*

Here are some examples of abuse in relationships.

**Physical abuse** is when your partner:

- stops you from leaving your home;
- breaks your things, damages property, or threatens to damage something that you value;
- shoves, slaps, bites, chokes, punches, or kicks you; and/or
- threatens or hurts you with a weapon or any object.

**Emotional or verbal abuse** is when your partner:

- embarrasses you, yells at you, insults you, or calls you bad names;
- constantly criticizes and blames you for everything;
- does not let you contact friends and family; and/or
- accuses you of having or wanting to have sex with someone else.

**Psychological abuse** is when your partner:

- decides what you can do or know about, where you can go, or who you can see;
- opens and reads your mail or private papers;
- follows or watches you wherever you are, or monitors your phone calls;
- phones or emails you again and again; and/or
- threatens to hurt you, your children, friends, or pet.

**Sexual abuse** is when your partner:

- forces you to have sex when you do not want to;
- forces you to perform sexual acts that make you uncomfortable or hurt you; and/or
- injures sexual parts of your body without your agreement.

**Financial abuse** is when your partner:

- makes all the household money decisions and does not let you have any money;
- does not let you use bank accounts or credit cards;
- refuses to let you get a job or makes you lose your job; and/or
- runs up debts in your name.

## Abuse that is against the law

Certain types of abuse are more harmful than others and are against the law — these are crimes. Assault and criminal harassment are crimes.

- **Physical assault** is when your partner hits or hurts you. It also is when your partner threatens to hit or hurt you, and you believe that can and will happen.
- **Sexual assault** is when anything sexual happens to you without your agreement. This includes unwanted kissing, sexual touching, and forced intercourse.
- **Criminal harassment** (sometimes called **stalking**) is when your partner forces unwanted and constant attention on you. It is a pattern of threats and actions that makes you afraid for yourself and your children. The law says that your partner cannot phone or email you again and again, follow you, threaten you, or threaten to destroy your property.

## Why you might stay

There are many reasons why you might stay with your abusive partner. One reason may be society's beliefs and attitudes about how men and women are expected to act. For example, our society expects men to be independent and strong and to protect women, not be abused by them.

Repeated psychological and emotional abuse over time lowers confidence and self-esteem. You may begin to believe that you have not met society's idea of what a man's role is and that you deserve the abuse. Such beliefs make it difficult for a man to leave an abusive relationship.

Other reasons why you stay may include:

- You want the relationship to continue because you love your partner and sometimes she acts loving and kind.
- You feel you are financially dependent on the abuser, especially if you have a disability.
- You are afraid for your children's safety.
- You do not want to be prevented from spending time with and caring for your children.
- You think no one will believe the abuse happened.
- You are in denial that you are in an abusive relationship (believing "it is not that bad" or "I am a man and can deal with it").

- You have no social supports because you stay away from your friends and family.
- You do not know about your legal rights or support services that can help you.
- You feel alone and pressured by language, family, or community problems, or by religious, cultural, or society's beliefs.

## You can get help

Because you are in an abusive relationship, you might feel embarrassed, ashamed, depressed, frustrated, guilty, and/or afraid and may not want to tell anyone or ask for help. Abuse in relationships is *not* a private family matter. You can get help, whether you want to stay in the relationship or leave.

Start by telling someone you trust and who you think will believe you about the abuse. Make a safety plan (action plan) that sets out steps you can take to protect yourself when abuse happens. See the fact sheet *Safety Planning*.

## Help from the police

You have the right to be free from abuse. If you are being assaulted or criminally harassed:

- Call **911** or the number for the emergency police or RCMP on the inside front cover of your phone book.
- If you do not speak English, ask 911 for an interpreter.

Police can help when abuse is happening or after it has happened. To help the police with your case, make notes about every time you are assaulted, threatened, or feel unsafe. Put in your notes:

- What happened
- Date and time of the abuse
- Where the abuse happened
- How you or your children were hurt
- Who else saw what happened

## Community help

Support services and trained people can help you wherever you live in BC.

- **Community services** give support, counselling, and information. Some organizations have support services specifically for men such as:

BC Society for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse  
**604-682-6482** (Greater Vancouver)  
**1-888-682-6482** (call no charge, elsewhere in BC)  
[www.bc-malesurvivors.com](http://www.bc-malesurvivors.com)

BC Men's Resource Centre  
**604-878-9033** (Greater Vancouver)  
[www.menbc.webs.com](http://www.menbc.webs.com)

Men's Trauma Centre  
**250-381-6367** (Victoria)  
**1-866-793-6367** (call no charge, elsewhere in BC)  
[www.menstrauma.com](http://www.menstrauma.com)

Check your local phone book for contact information of other support services, or the Directory of Victim Services in BC at [www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/directory/index.htm](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/victimservices/directory/index.htm). The Government of Canada Directory of Services and Programs for Abused Men in Canada lists support centres and services in BC at [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/maleabus-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/maleabus-eng.php).

- **Victim service workers** give free legal information and emotional support. Call VictimLink BC at **1-800-563-0808** (call no charge, 24 hours every day) or see the website at [www.victimlinkbc.ca](http://www.victimlinkbc.ca).

## Legal help

### Legal Services Society (legal aid)

**604-408-2172** (Greater Vancouver)  
**1-866-577-2525** (call no charge, elsewhere in BC)

- For free services like the Family LawLINE, advice from **family duty counsel** (lawyers) at courts, a lawyer if you cannot afford one, and legal aid information, see [www.legalaid.bc.ca](http://www.legalaid.bc.ca).
- See free legal information at [www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca](http://www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca).

### Lawyer Referral Service

**604-687-3221** (Greater Vancouver)  
**1-800-663-1919** (call no charge, elsewhere in BC)

- Gives you the name of a lawyer to discuss the legal problem with you for \$25 plus taxes (first half-hour). You can then hire this lawyer or ask for another name.

### If you are Aboriginal

- You may be able to get legal help from your friendship centre, your band's social development office, and/or an Aboriginal delegated agency.
- Call VictimLink BC (above phone number) for the name of a Native courtworker near you who can help.

## More information

- *Surviving Relationship Violence and Abuse* (booklet) [www.legalaid.bc.ca/publications](http://www.legalaid.bc.ca/publications) (click "Abuse & family violence")
- Links to brochures about abuse in same-sex relationships [www.legalaid.bc.ca/publications](http://www.legalaid.bc.ca/publications) (click "Gays, lesbians, trans, & bisexuals")

This fact sheet explains the law in general. It is not intended to give you legal advice on your particular problem. This fact sheet is one of a series produced by the Legal Services Society. Other fact sheets in this series (some are in several languages):

- **What Is Abuse?**
- **Women Abused by Their Partners**
- **If Your Sponsor Abuses You**
- **Safety Planning**
- **Getting Help from the Police or RCMP**
- **Protection Orders**
- **Parenting**
- **What to Do About Money**
- **The Criminal Court Process**
- **Staying in the Family Home on Reserve**



**Legal Services Society**

British Columbia  
[www.legalaid.bc.ca](http://www.legalaid.bc.ca)

