



# Domestic Violence 101 Toolkit

Recognize. Respond. Refer.



# STOP VIOLENCE

AGAINST WOMEN





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# Vision Statement

Nisa Homes aims to help the most vulnerable and marginalised members of our community. Our practice model focuses on helping women heal, a support network to help rebuild themselves and curate opportunities that can help them flourish out in the community.

We work in providing women a sense of dignity and personal identity that aligns with their values of culture and Muslim identity.

This home is a center of empowerment where the vulnerable are given the hope, the broken are rebuilt and the helpless are given the dignity.

Nisa Homes put together this document to provide the community with an overview of what domestic violence is, what the cycle of abuse looks like and what are the next steps that can be taken to create a more sustainable society.



## What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic Violence, also known as **Intimate partner violence (IPV)**, is a form of gender-based violence. The United Nations defines domestic violence as, “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”.



### **Domestic violence can happen in many forms of relationships including but not limited to:**

- Within a marriage, common-law or a dating relationship
- Regardless of gender and sexual orientation of 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

The right to live a life free of violence is a fundamental human right. However, women across the globe, from all backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and religions, are victims of gender-based violence every day. Women account for majority of domestic violence, which takes on several shapes including but not limited to physical abuse. Global statistical data reported by United Nations found, that 1 in 3 women are victims of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse by their intimate partners or family members.

In terms of domestic violence research has shown that women are more likely to experience violence than men by 38% (source). Further, it is reported that women are more likely than men to experience the most severe forms of spousal victimization such as higher rates of physical and sexual injuries. While violence against men by women can happen but control and dominance are less likely to be motivating factors behind the abuse. Men are likely to initiate violence whereas as women use it as form of self-defense. Thus, different strategies are required to deal with violence against women and men.



women on average are killed every year by their common law spouse



of Canadian women have reported that they have been a victim of abuse on average once in their lifetime

Department of Justice 2019

The World Health Organization categorizes domestic violence as a major global public health and safety concern for women.

As intimate partner, violence affects millions of people and can result in immediate and long lasting economic, health and social consequences. Domestic violence impacts the workplace in several ways. When it occurs in the home, its impacts can be felt at work—for example, both victims and perpetrators experience absenteeism, concentration difficulties, and poorer work performance as direct consequences of violence. It impacts women's ability to maintain economic independence.

More than half (53%) of study respondents who experienced domestic violence said that at least one type of abusive act happened at or near their workplace. Almost 40% of those who had experienced domestic abuse said it made it difficult for them to get to work, and 8.5% said that they lost their jobs because of violence.

Every member of society eventually feels the impact of spousal violence through the additional financial strain imposed on publicly funded systems and services. An estimated \$7.4 billion was or will be lost to society because of spousal violence incidents that occurred in 2009 according to the Department of Justice.

According to the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability, in 2020, 160 women and girls were killed by violence in Canada. That's an average of one woman or girl killed every 2.3 days. And sexual assault, one of the most under-reported crimes in Canada, is also the only violent crime not on the decline (Statistics Canada, 2017).



### What causes violence against women?

In our society, gender inequality is visible in many areas, including politics, religion, media, cultural norms, and the workplace. Both men and women receive many messages — both overt and covert — that it is natural for men to have more social power than women.

This makes it easier to believe that men have a right to control women, even if it requires violence. The rigidity of gender roles when intersected with culture serves as a strong contributing factor to violence against women.

These types of mechanisms can be inflicted by an individual or family members, but the basic root of this violence is laid in cultural systems built on patriarchy.

The system of patriarchy establishes the belief that women are inferior, and men are the superior ones. This belief system is not just unique to one culture but unfortunately is a global phenomenon.

## Who is at most risk of violence against women?

Violence against women happens in all cultures and religions, in all ethnic and racial communities, at every age, and in every income group. However, some women are especially at risk:

- Aboriginal women are six times more likely to be killed than non-Aboriginal women.
- RCMP police reported data in 2019 reported that younger women are at a much higher data risk of violent victimization. (Source Department of Justice)
- The rates of spousal violence and homicide are highest amongst women aged 15 to 24 age group.
- Women living with physical and cognitive impairments experience violence two to three times more often than women living without impairments
- 60% of women with a disability experience some form of violence.
- Immigrant women may be more vulnerable to domestic violence due to economic dependence, language barriers, and a lack of knowledge about community resources. Newcomers who arrive in Canada traumatized by war or oppressive governments are much less likely to report physical or sexual violence to the authorities, for fear of further victimization or even deportation.
- Women who identified as lesbian or bisexual were three to four times more likely than heterosexual women to report experiencing spousal violence.
- Studies show that when women of colour report violence, their experiences are taken less seriously within the criminal justice system.

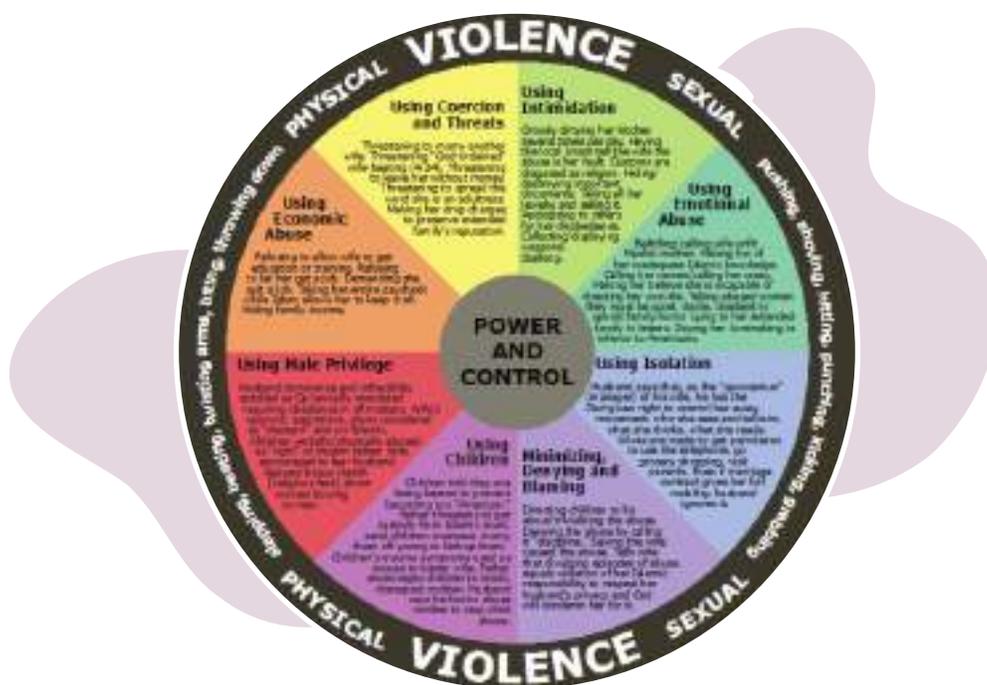


## Violence in the Muslim Community

While research shows that all domestic violence rates across religions is approximately 10% (find source), what domestic violence looks like in each community and religion can look different.

The Muslim Wheel of Domestic Violence was developed by Sr. Sharifa Alkhateeb. It conveys some of the ways religion can be distorted to justify abuse against women and children in the family context. It is a useful tool for understanding what spiritual abuse looks like in Muslim relationships. Unfortunately, using religion to justify ongoing domestic abuse is spiritual abuse – and should be labelled as one. Speaking against oppression and abuse is not only allowed but encouraged in Islam.

### Muslim Wheel of Domestic Violence by Sharifa Alkahteeb



### Types of Muslim Wheel of Abuse:

#### 1. Isolation

- husband says that as the "qawwamun" (manager) of his wife, he has the God-given right to control her every movement, who she sees and talks to, what she thinks, what she reads
- wives are made to get permission to use the telephone, go grocery shopping, visit parents
- Even if marriage contracts give her full mobility, her husband ignores it

#### 2. Denial and Blame

- directing children to lie about/trivializing the abuse
- denying the abuse by calling it "discipline"
- saying the wife caused the abuse
- tells wife that divulging episode of abuse equals violation of her Islamic responsibility to respect her husband's privacy and God will condemn her for it

## Types of Muslim Wheel of Abuse continued:

### 3. Children

- children told they are being beaten to prevent becoming too "American"
- father threatens to get custody from Islamic court, send children overseas, marry them off young or kidnap them
- children's trauma symptoms used as excuse to batter wife
- father encourages children to insult, disrespect their mother.
- husband says he has to abuse mother to stop child abuse

### 4. Male privilege

- husband's dominance and inflexibility extolled as Qu'ranically mandated requiring obedience in all matters
- wife's opinions, aspirations, plans considered as "Western" and un-Islamic
- children verbally/physically abused as "right" of Muslim father
- wife encouraged to fear husband
- repeats bogus Hadith [religious text] about women bowing to men

### 5. Economic abuse

- refusing to allow wife to get education or training
- refusing to let her get a job
- demanding she quit a job
- taking her entire paycheck while Islam allows her to keep it all
- hiding family income



## Types of Muslim Wheel of Abuse continued:

### 6. Coercion and threat

- threatening to marry another wife
- threatening "God-ordained" wife beating (Qu'ran 4:34)
- threatening to leave her without money
- threatening to spread the word that she is an adulteress
- making her drop charges to preserve extended family's reputation

### 7. Intimidation

- grossly dirtying her kitchen several times, a day
- having the local Imam [clergyman] tell the wife that the abuse is her fault
- customs are disguised as religion
- hiding/destroying important documents
- taking all her jewelry and selling it
- apologizing to others for her disobedience
- collecting, displaying weapons
- Stalking

### 8. Emotional abuse

- belittling/calling wife unfit Muslim mother
- making fun of her inadequate Islamic knowledge
- calling her names/calling her crazy
- making her believe she is incapable of directing her own life
- telling abused women, they must be quiet, docile, obedient to uphold family honor
- lying to her extended family in letters
- saying her lovemaking is inferior to Americans



## Why do Muslim families keep silent and how does their silence contribute to the cycle of abuse?



### 1. Family pride

The family may worry about harming their reputation. One woman's divorce may harm the marriage prospects of her younger sisters.

### 2. Divorce

An unacceptable negative stigma attached to divorce plays a huge role in downplaying domestic violence.

### 3. Financial challenge

The family's financial situation often determines their reaction to domestic violence. They may keep quiet to avoid the cost of taking care of a victim and her children.

### 4. Abuse is justified as a form of love

It's what they know and tend to believe that abuse is normal and happens in every family.

### 5. Immigration laws

Immigrants tend to be scared of the social services system and they feel that their consequences will be severe or will not take religious laws into consideration.

### 6. Delusion

The victim/ family may constantly live under pretense that the abuser will change over time or that they require time to figure out their next move.

## How has Muslim communities' attitude towards domestic violence served as a contributor to the cycle of abuse?



### **Ignorance:**

The community believes that domestic violence does not exist or is rare as a result of which it is a stigma that is rarely spoken about. This leads to hushed voices and minimizing the seriousness of the issue of domestic violence.



### **It's not their business:**

The community believes that it's impolite and rude to intervene in somebody's personal lives and should rather ignore or be on the side lines respecting their privacy.



### **Community Pride:**

Post 9/11 era, Muslim communities generally want to avoid any association with violence. They want to avoid discussion so that they are not further stereotyped as perpetrators of violence.



### **Abuser's influence:**

The abusers' financial and social status maybe a contributing factor in influencing the community to turn a blind eye. For instance, some abusers have secured local positions at local mosques or Muslim organizations.

# The Cycle of Abuse

Experts, social workers and therapists often talk about abuse that tends to happen within a defined cycle. But what exactly is the cycle they are addressing?

Psychologist Lenore Walker in her book “The Battered Women” addressed the four stages that are involved in the cycle of abuse. This cycle of violence helps address the common patterns of abuse in an abusive relationship.

## 1. The building of tension

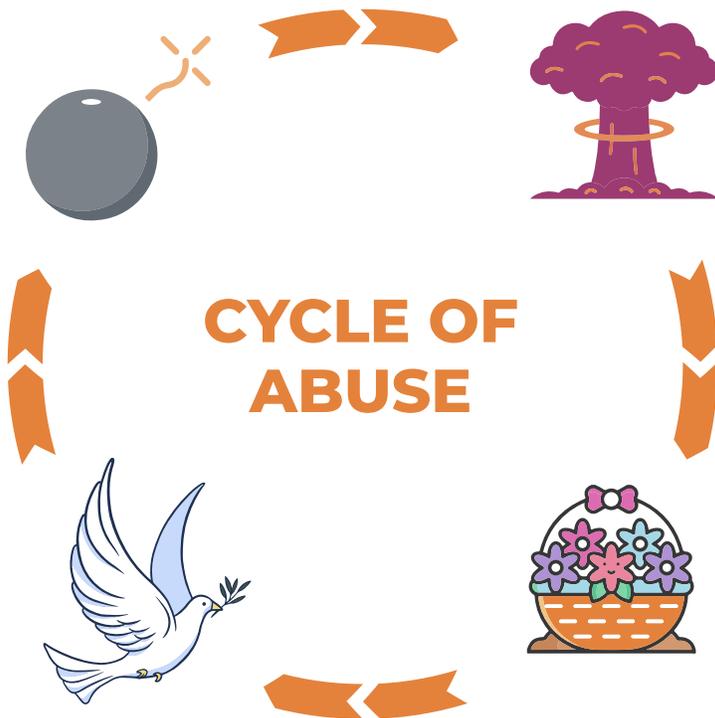
Abusive partners use external stressors often to lash out and anything can fuel these tensions such as family issues, trouble at work, physical illness or fatigue. These frustrations and dissatisfaction tend to intensify over a period of time, which can often lead to feelings of injustice, paranoia and, powerlessness.

## 2. Incident of abuse or violence

The abuser will eventually try and regain power back of the situation by asserting control. The abuse in this relm may look like:

- Insults or name calling
- Threat or destruction of property
- Attempts to control the behaviour of the victim
- Sexual or physical violence
- Emotional blackmail

**1. Tension Building**  
Tensions increase, lack of communication, victim becomes fearful



**2. Incident**  
Verbal, emotional and physical abuse

**3. Reconciliation**  
Abuser apologizes, gives excuses, blames the victim, denies the abuse occurred

**4. Calm**  
The relationship is relatively calm and peaceable. The “honeymoon” phase

## The Cycle of Abuse continued

### 3. Reconciliation

In this stage the abuser is to show kindness, gifts or loving gestures to attempt to return back to a honeymoon stage. This staged effort can make the victim feel that the rough part of the relationship is over and that they are back to their regular programming.

### 4. Calm

After the incident of abuse the abuser and the victim both seem to come up with sort of an explanation that justifies the abuse.

The abusive partner may use tactics like:

- Apologise while blaming others
- Point out external factors that justify the behaviour
- Accuse the victim of provoking it
- Minimize the abuse or deny flat out that it happened

### 5. Rinse and repeat

This cycle then keeps on repeating over time. This cycle happens over and over again within abusive relationships and the duration of each cycle can vary. As the cycle repeats the period of calm can become short or even disappear.

Abuse often happens without warning, outside of any set cycle.



## The cycle of abuse leads to victim blaming

The idea that abuse happens in a circular pattern makes it easier for survivors to put the blame for the abuse where it doesn't seem to belong:

**“You should have left as soon as they calmed down”**

**“You should have known it would happen”**

**“They wouldn't have gotten so angry or jealous if you hadn't gone out.”**

Victims have a difficult time accepting that the responsibility for the abuse lies with the abuser. At the end of the day no matter what they did or did not do, the abuse was never their fault. Remaining in the cycle and constantly attempting to keep calm tends to become a strategy for the survival of one's self.

## Types of Domestic Abuse

### 1. Psychological Abuse

- Threats of divorce and social stigma
- Dismissing or refusing to consider the woman's point of view
- Lying, abusing, and tarnishing the woman's reputation
- Monitoring her activities, social interactions, clothing choices, workplace environment
- Threats of violence
- Threats of marrying another woman

### 2. Financial abuse

- Threat of leaving and taking away the economic support
- Asking the woman to surrender her earnings
- Control over educational or career opportunities/ choices
- Not given access to finances

### 3. Physical abuse

- Locking them inside or outside the home
- Beating them and the children
- Restricted dress code adherence
- Isolating them from their family
- Kicking, burning, beating them with a weapon, pushing, pulling hair

### 4. Sexual abuse

- Forced to engage in sex
- Watch porn
- Perform acts of unwanted activity
- Child marriages and marital rape
- Controlling birth control mechanism
- Forced to have more children



### 5. Legal abuse

- Taking ownership over passports and legal documents
- Denying them immigration, paperwork
- Transitional abandonment
- Threats to throw them out or send back home if the demands are not obeyed

### 6. Spiritual abuse

- The manipulation of religion to justify abuse
- Using verses of the Quran to encourage & preach abuse
- Using environmental and spiritual fear
- Spirituality used as an avenue for emotional and psychological abuse
- repeats bogus Hadith [religious text] about women bowing to men

### 7. Using Intimidation

- grossly dirtying her kitchen several times, a day
- having the local Imam [clergyman] tell the wife that the abuse is her fault
- customs are disguised as religion
- hiding/destroying important documents
- taking all her jewelry and selling it
- apologizing to others for her disobedience
- collecting, displaying weapons
- stalking

## Types of Domestic Abuse continued

### 8. Accessibility abuse

- Locked in confined spaces
- Not allowed to go out and have control over daily activities
- Denied access to healthcare and social services

### 9. Verbal Abuse

- Name calling
- Placing undue blame
- An overly critical spirit
- Resentment
- Slapping negative labels on personal traits or behaviors
- Responding with ridicule rather than encouragement
- Threatening physical harm
- Starting rumors that degrade reputation
- Angry outburst
- Manipulation (if you love me, you'll do \_)
- Withholding information
- Failing to display affection
- Refusing to acknowledge the partners' feelings
- Using sarcastic or mocking tones even if the message itself is positive



## Barrier's women face when attempting to leave a relationship

### 1. Cultural and language barriers

Language and culture are two important elements that tend to define the type of help that an individual has access to. For instance, many women seeking help report that they are unable to comprehend English, and the lack of translator resources available on the helplines leads to a lack of knowledge and awareness of resources and services to support them.

### 2. Stigma

In a survey conducted in 2020, it was found that the word “shame” and “honour” plays a huge role in girls and women’s lives from a very young age. The biggest challenge in setting up a community against gender-based violence is overcoming the stigma that is attached to women speaking out against injustice and wanting to seek help. The fact that there is nothing dishonourable in seeking justice in fact, what is dishonorable is physically, psychologically, or emotionally damaging a woman and her identity. By perpetuating the stigma for generations, the community plays a role in advancing abuse. Abuse has incredibly strong psychological impacts on one’s ability to self-love, grow and see themselves as individuals who are not at fault. So, when you combine abuse with the ideology of honour and shame it leads to women suffering in silence and ingraining the association of guilt on behalf of the family. All these interwoven factors create a conscious cycle making it difficult for women to seek help.



### 3. Lack of knowledge and awareness of rights

Legal experts say that Canada's laws governing intimate partner violence are making life more difficult for victims (Jennifer Koshan, Uni of Calgary Law Professor). Part of the reason for that is there are sometimes conflicting definitions of domestic violence, and the jurisdiction for trying to rein in the problem is divided in and can differ from province to province.

Further, some victims of domestic violence are refugees and immigrants who are not aware of the Criminal Code and the legal system in Canada, which makes it difficult for them to ask for help. Refugee women especially remain undocumented for a long period of time making it difficult for them to access legal help.

## Barrier's women face when attempting to leave a relationship continued

### 4. Islamophobia

Faith plays an essential role in the professional understanding of how culturally responsive and trauma informed care should be provided. The idea that when a client is telling their story and their needs, they should not have to be providing cultural context to a caseworker. In a study conducted, a Muslim woman reported that she had been admitted to a shelter during the month of Ramadan. The management at the shelter did not understand that she could not abide by the normal dining rules as she was fasting. This led to her often fasting without any meals. This one example goes to show why women find it difficult to reach out for help because they fear exploitation.

### 5. Intersection of social and economic factors

Women often stay because the abuser has threatened to kill them if they leave, or to kill himself, or to kill the children. Women believe these threats for good reason—the most dangerous time for an abused woman is when she attempts to leave her abuser.

About 26% of all women who are murdered by their spouse had left the relationship. Almost 60% of all dating violence happens after the relationship has ended.

Women might stay because they are financially dependent on their partner; leaving an abusive relationship may involve a choice between violence and poverty as more than 1.5 million women in Canada live on a low income. Women who leave a partner to raise children on their own are five times more likely to be poor than if they had stayed.

Domestic abuse is often a gradual process, with the frequency of assaults and seriousness of the violence slowly escalating over time. Since abusers often express deep remorse and promise to change, it can take years for women to admit that the violence will never stop and the relationship is unsalvageable. The long-term experience of being abused can destroy a woman's self-confidence, making it more difficult for her to believe that she deserves better treatment, that she can find the courage to leave, or that she can manage on her own.



## Signs that you or someone is experiencing domestic violence

### 1) Signs that you are in an abusive relationship

- Your partner puts you down
- The abuser does all the talking for you and dominates the conversation
- They check up on you even when they are at work
- They claim that you hurt them and label themselves as the victim in the relationship
- They isolate you from your family and friends
- They treat you like a trophy wife
- They act like they are superior and contribute more to the family
- They control your finances

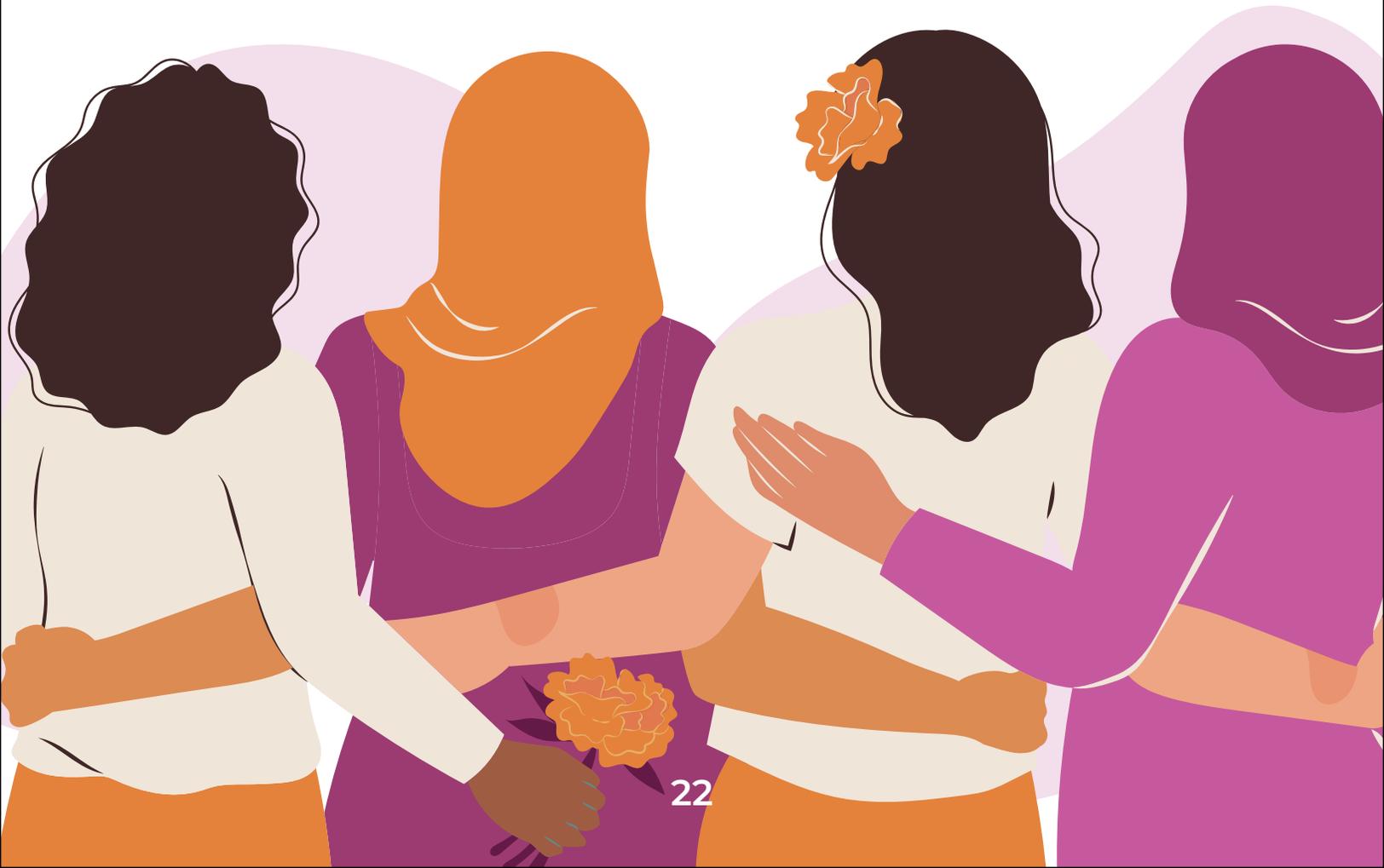
### 2) Signs that someone is in an abusive relationship

- They cover up bruises or physical injuries
- They seem to miss work
- They get nervous when others cross boundaries
- They make excuses last minute about not meeting you
- They seem sad and withdrawn
- They are constantly apologetic about small things



## Ways that you can support someone experiencing domestic violence

- Offer childcare when they ask for help
- Talk to them and tell them you are concerned. In the case that they tell you about it reassure them that it is not their fault
- If they have children, let the person you are concerned about know gently that you are worried about their and their children's safety and emotional well-being.
- Do not lash out and question their life choices instead calmly help them see the situation from your perspective
- Assure them that you are available to help
- Help and provide them options that they can consider such as shelter homes and violence centers
- Tell them not to confront their partners if they plan on escaping
- Guide or provide help with financial aid
- Encourage them to get a hold of their legal documents in a small bag in case of a situation they plan on escaping





## Why is reducing domestic violence urgent?

Violence harms and traumatises those who are directly victimized but it also harms their dependents, families, and, communities. Gender-based violence has a profound effect on children. 1 in 3 adults report experiencing child sexual abuse or physical abuse and/or exposure to intimate partner violence, and it is strongly linked to mental health concerns (Affifi et al., 2014). The consequences are significant and “can create vulnerabilities over the life course” (Alaggia and Donohue, 2017).

Beyond the human suffering it causes, gender-based violence costs billions of dollars. According to a 2013 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives report, the annual cost of adult sexual assault and intimate partner violence is \$334 per person or \$9 billion for all of Canada.

Community-level approaches for creating protective environments against the perpetration of partner violence should include efforts to:

### 1. Improve organizational policies and workplace climate

Workplace approaches can aid employees and managers in raising awareness about domestic violence, recognizing the potential for violence by an intimate partner of an employee occurring in the workplace, facilitate how incidents can be reported and handled, and demonstrate commitment to workplace safety.

## Why is reducing domestic violence urgent? Continued

### 2. Modify physical and social environments of neighbourhoods

There are a number of mechanisms by which living in disadvantaged neighborhoods can place people at greater risk for partner violence. These neighborhoods typically have higher rates of crime and violence. Exposure to neighborhood violence is a risk factor for domestic violence. Additionally, the stress associated with living in disadvantaged neighborhoods and social norms that govern violence in these communities are also possible mechanisms for this increased risk. These community-level factors can be addressed by changing, enacting, or enforcing laws and regulations (e.g., alcohol-related policies); improving the economic stability of neighborhood. By changing the physical environment to improve social interaction, and strengthen community ties and social cohesion can lead to creating a more holistic community at large.

### 3. Victim centered services

Services that are based on the unique needs and circumstances of victims and survivors and coordinated among community agencies and victim advocates.

### 4. Housing Programs

Programs that support survivors in obtaining rapid access to stable and affordable housing reduce barriers to seeking safety. Once this immediate need is met, the survivor can focus on meeting other needs and the needs of impacted children.

### 5. Eliminating barriers to legal protection

Law enforcement which is designed to help survivors and decrease their immediate risk for future violence, orders of protection, and support for children.

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**+1 888 711 6472**

**info@nisafoundation.ca**

**nisafoundation.ca**

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**      @nisa.foundation**