

Effects of Intimate Partner Violence on Children

In Newfoundland and Labrador it is everyone's responsibility to report any information dealing with child abuse. If you suspect a child has been abused, or a child tells you they have been abused, it is the law to report it immediately. See it. Report it. It's the law.

Violence during Pregnancy

- Pregnancy does not reduce the risk of experiencing any form of violence, including homicide¹.
- Almost one quarter of women who experience intimate partner violence are assaulted during pregnancy².
 - In 40 per cent of those incidents, it was the first episode of violence.
- Violence during pregnancy can result in low birth weight, preterm labour or miscarriage³.

Direct Harm

- Children can be harmed during an incident of intimate partner violence¹.
- In 30-40 per cent of households where the partner is abused, the children are also abused⁴.
- Children who live in situations of intimate partner violence can experience short- and long-term emotional, behavioural, and developmental problems, including posttraumatic stress disorder, depression and poor concentration⁴.

Witnessing Violence

- Even when children are not direct targets of violence in the home, they can be harmed by witnessing it⁴.
- Most violent incidents are seen or heard by children in the home².
- Witnessing family violence is as harmful as experiencing it directly⁴. Children from violent homes have some of the same behavioural and psychological problems as physically abused children⁵.

- Living in a situation where there is violence or living in a situation where there is a risk of violence, including witnessing violence against a parent, is considered a form of maltreatment by provincial child welfare legislation⁶.
 - Child protection systems work with families to mitigate risk by providing necessary services to ensure child safety.
- **Cognitive development effects¹**
 - Cognitive/sensory growth in infants/small children can be impaired by harm to brain development from emotional stress.
 - Children may have problems with language development.
 - Difficulty learning:
 - Trouble with school work, poor concentration and focus, poorer performance in school (e.g., lower reading ability).
- **Emotional/psychological problems⁷**
 - Excessive irritability
 - Sleep problems
 - Emotional distress
 - Fear of being alone
 - Suffer from depression or severe anxiety
 - Suicidal tendencies
 - Low self-esteem⁸
 - Stress-induced illnesses
- **Personality/behavioural problems⁷**
 - Small children can demonstrate problems with toilet training, immature behaviour.
 - Primary age children can experience bedwetting.
 - Violent, risky, or delinquent behaviour:
 - Primary age children: defiant, destroy property⁸.
 - Teenagers: Substance abuse, pregnancy, criminal behaviour.
- **Social development problems⁷**
 - Children may develop limited social skills.
 - Children may lose the ability to feel empathy for others.
 - They may feel socially isolated because they are unable to make friends easily due to social discomfort or confusion about acceptable behaviour.
 - They exhibit aggressive behaviour toward their peers (e.g., verbal abuse, fighting).

Children who witness intimate partner violence are more likely to be either perpetrators or victims of intimate partner violence later in life⁷.

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- ¹ Sinha, M. (2012). *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2010. Section 2: Violence against intimate partners*. (Catalogue no. 85-002-X). Retrieved from Statistics Canada website: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11643-eng.pdf>
- ² Johnson, H. (Ed.). (2006). *Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends 2006*. (Catalogue no. 85-570-XIE). Retrieved from Statistics Canada website: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-570-x/85-570-x2006001-eng.pdf>
- ³ World Health Organization. (2011). *Intimate partner violence during pregnancy*. Retrieved from World Health Organization website: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2011/WHO_RHR_11.35_eng.pdf?ua=1
- ⁴ Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (2012). *Intimate partner violence and abuse – It can be stopped*. Retrieved from Royal Canadian Mounted Police website: http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/cp-pc/pdfs/int_par-rel_int-eng.pdf
- ⁵ UNICEF. (2006). *Behind closed doors. The impact of domestic violence on children*. Retrieved from UNICEF website: <http://www.unicef.org/protection/files/BehindClosedDoors.pdf>
- ⁶ Sinha, M. (Ed.). (2013). *Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends*. (Catalogue no. 85-002-X). Retrieved from Statistics Canada website: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf>
- ⁷ Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers responsible for the Status of Women. (2013). *Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends – Key findings. Intimate Partner and Spousal Violence*. Retrieved from Status of Women Canada website: <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/rc-cr/pub/violence-partner-partenaire-eng.pdf>
- ⁸ Sudermann, M. & Jaffe, P. (1999). *A handbook for health and social service providers and educators on children exposed to woman abuse/family violence*. Retrieved from Government of Canada website: <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/H72-21-163-1998E.pdf>