



WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

AND DOMESTIC/INTIMATE
PARTNER VIOLENCE

FACTSHEET

SIGNS

- **Withholding** or sabotaging **needed equipment** (e.g. wheelchairs, hearing aids, medications, ramps) or **harming animal assistants**



- **Making threats** that **leaving** the relationship **will result in institutionalization** for the woman
- Includes the **possible loss of their home and child**
- **Refusing** to interpret or **failing to interpret verbal communications** with service providers in an **attempt to undermine a woman** and her decision-making ability

- **Withholding assistance**
- **EXAMPLES:**
 - **Denial** of access to the **bathroom**
 - Leaving a woman in a **physically uncomfortable** or embarrassing **position** for a long time



- **Violence** in attempting to **access health** and **social services**
 - Especially when individuals face **compounded oppression**, due to racism and other forms of **discrimination** from medical professionals
 - E.g. **refusal** to provide **necessary services**

- **Devaluation of skills** and strengths which impacts **women with disabilities** and **D/deaf** women in their **ability to seek** housing, employment, and treatment



STATISTICS

“Data from an eight-year survey of college students at Rochester Institute of Technology indicated that deaf and hard of hearing individuals are 1.5 times more likely to be victims of relationship violence, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, psychological abuse and physical abuse, in their lifetimes” **(Dube, 2010).**

“Although it is commonly reported that 25% of women in the general population experience domestic violence in their lifetime, estimates within the Deaf community are closer to 50%” **(Anderson & Leigh, 2011)**

“Investigators rarely assume that disabled women have intimate partners, so IPV (intimate partner violence) often goes undetected.” **(Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 2005)**

“Women with disabilities living in marital or common law unions are reported as 40% more likely to experience violence” **(Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 2005)**

“While rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) are higher among women who report an activity limitation than those without.” **(Cohen, Forte, Du Mont, Hyman, & Romans, 2005).**

“It has been estimated as many as 276,000 women in Canada will experience TBI annually as the result of intimate partner violence.” **(P van Donkelaar, 2015)**

Barnett, O., Miller-Perrin, C. L., & Perrin, R. D. (2005). Family violence across the lifespan: An introduction (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (pp. 353-354) <https://dawnCanada.net/issues/women-with-disabilities-and-violence/>

Cohen, M. M., Forte, T., Du Mont, J., Hyman, I., & Romans, S. (2005). Intimate partner violence among Canadian women with activity limitations. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 59(10), 834-839.

Dube, W. (2010). College Survey Indicates Relationship Violence is Higher in the Deaf Community. Rochester Institute of Technology. <https://www.rit.edu/news/college-survey-indicates-relationship-violence-higher-deaf-community>

Lalonde, D., & Baker, L. (2019). Women with Disabilities and D/deaf Women, Housing, and Violence. *Learning Network Issue 27*. London, Ontario: Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children. ISBN # 978-1-988412-28-3

Pinto, P. C. (2015). Women, disability, and the right to health. *Women's Health 2e: Intersections of Policy, Research, and Practice*, 137

P van Donkelaar (2015) Traumatic Brain Injury: The unseen impact of domestic violence. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/traumatic-brain-injury-the-unseen-impact-of-domestic-violence-92730>

STATISTICS

CANADA

**Cotter, A. (2018). Violent victimization of women with disabilities. *Statistics Canada*.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54910-eng.htm>**

“According to the 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization, women with a disability were twice as likely as women who did not have a disability to have experienced a violent crime.”

“The rate of violent victimization among women with a cognitive disability or mental health-related disability was approximately four times higher than among women who did not have a disability.”

“Women with a disability were nearly twice as likely as women without a disability to have been sexually assaulted in the past 12 months (36% versus 20%).”

“Women living with disabilities experience disproportionately high rates of violence. They face 45% of all reported incidents of violent crime against women in Canada.” which means “Nearly half of all violent victimization is committed against women with a disability”

“With respect to spousal abuse, 39% of women with disabilities have experienced spousal violence, 46% have been physically injured because of this violence, and 38% have feared for their lives.”

“38% of women with disabilities report physical or sexual assault before the age of 15, and 18% report sexual abuse by an adult before the age of 15.”

“Women with a disability most often reported the perpetrator was a friend, acquaintance, or neighbour (44%) and 30% of incidents of victimization occurred in their home.”

“In general, women with disabilities who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual experience 2.3 times higher rates of violence than among heterosexual women with disabilities.”

“Women with cognitive disabilities are more likely to be the victim on violence from a common-law partner, or current or former spouse (43%).”

“Women with disabilities are five times more likely to report unsatisfactory services from police (than among women without disabilities).”

“With respect to IPV, 71% of women with disabilities report contacting or using formal support services following violence.”

STATISTICS

SHELTERS

"10% of women staying in shelters report having a disability; however, only 75% of shelters report having a wheelchair accessible entrance, 66% of shelters provided wheelchair accessible rooms and bathrooms, 17% of shelters provide sign language, and 5% offer braille, reading materials" **(Canadian Centre For Justice Statistics. 2009)**

"Less than half (47%) of VAW shelters reported that all shelter services were "generally accessible" for women who use a wheelchair or other mobility device; 26% were "somewhat" accessible and 26% were "difficult to access." **(Maki, 2019)**

"79% of respondents that had served women with complex mental health concerns and 79% that had served women with substance use concerns reported that it was a "major challenge" for their shelter." **(Maki, 2019)**

Canadian Centre For Justice Statistics (2009), Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, p.15.
<https://dawnCanada.net/issues/women-with-disabilities-and-violence/>

Maki, K. (2019). "More Than a Bed: A National Profile of VAW Shelters and Transition Houses." Ottawa, ON: Women's Shelters Canada. <https://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/More-Than-a-Bed-Exec-Summary.pdf>

INTERNATIONAL

"A global study found that girls and young women with disabilities experience up to 10 times more violence than those without disabilities"

"Women and girls with disabilities suffer up to three times greater risk of rape, are twice as likely to be survivors of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence and are likely to experience abuse over a longer period and with more severe injuries than women without disabilities."

United Nations. (n.d). Ending violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities.
<https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20untf/publications/2018/untf%20pagerdisability%20and%20vaw%20finalcompressed.pdf?la=en&vs=953>

STATISTICS

UNITED STATES

“Only three percent of sexual abuse cases involving people with developmental and cognitive disabilities are ever reported. Yet, people with cognitive disabilities experience the highest rates of violence of all people with disabilities” **(YWCA, 2017)**

“Police respond to 90% of reports by victims without disabilities and 77% of reports by victims with disabilities.” **(Harrell & Rand, 2008)**

“Women with disabilities have a 40 percent greater chance of intimate partner violence than women without disabilities”

“An estimated 2 in 5 (39%) female victims of rape had a disability at the time of the rape.” **(Basile, Breiding, & Smith, 2016)**

American Psychological Association. (n.d). Abuse of women with disabilities.
<https://www.apa.org/topics/violence/women-disabilities>

Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., & Smith, S. G. (2016). Disability and Risk of Recent Sexual Violence in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106(5), 928-933.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4985079/>

Harrell, E. & Rand, M.R. (2008). National Crime Victimization Survey. *U.S Department of Justice*.
<https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/capd08.pdf>

YWCA.(2017). Survivors with disability facts. <https://www.ywca.org/wp-content/uploads/Survivors-w-Disabilities-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

Other Resources

<https://www.endabusepwd.org/problem/alarming-rates/>

<https://www.who.int/disabilities/violence/en/>

<https://www.unfpa.org/news/five-things-you-didnt-know-about-disability-and-sexual-violence>

https://dawnCanada.net/media/uploads/page_data/page-64/more_than_a_footnote_research_report.pdf

http://www.vawlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/issuebased_newsletters/issue-27/index.html

<https://www.dawnCanada.net/main/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Women-with-Disabilites-and-Abuse-Access-to-Supports.pdf>

BARRIERS

- **Difficulty** in making **contact** with **shelters** or other intervention services
- **Lack of access to information** about available services
- **Difficulties** in accessing **transportation**
- Fear of **losing** their **financial security**, their **housing** or their **welfare** benefits
- Fear of **being institutionalized**



- Fear they will **not** be **believed** or perceived as not credible **by the police** or the **courts**
- Fear that there will **not be appropriate services available**

- In situations in which domestic violence is experienced, women with disabilities may **fear leaving** their **abuser** because of **dependence** on the emotional, financial or physical variety
- Fear of **losing custody** of their **children** may **prevent** women with disabilities from **reporting** abuse.





- **Law enforcement** authorities **may not** take appropriate **action** to respond to reports of violence against women
- Girls and women with disabilities may **avoid reporting** instances of **abuse** in order to **avoid discriminatory action, retribution, potential institutionalization** or **loss of economic** and other **supports**.

- **One woman out of ten** got the support she asked for at women's shelters or transition houses .
- When they do not receive proper support, it is often for **accessibility reasons**.

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- Women with disabilities who are from **Indigenous or rural communities** may **lack information** about access to available services for the prevention and response to violence and abuse.
- The process may be **slower** for a woman with a disability who is considering leaving her abusive partner as **accessing housing, attendant care, and interpreters** may **take time** .

RESOURCES

MORE THAN A FOOTNOTE RESEARCH SUMMARY

<https://www.dawncanada.net/issues/new-page-morethanafootnote/>

MORE THAN A FOOTNOTE RESEARCH

[https://www.dawncanada.net/media/uploads/page_data/page-64/beyond_crpd_final_eng_\(2\).pdf](https://www.dawncanada.net/media/uploads/page_data/page-64/beyond_crpd_final_eng_(2).pdf)

DISABLED WOMEN'S NETWORK CANADA (DAWN CANADA)

<https://dawncanada.net/ppbdp-en/otherresources/>

Deaf DAWN in DC

<https://deafdawn.org/>

There's something in the water by Ingrid G. Waldron (book about environmental racism)

<https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/there8217s-something-in-the-water>

RESOURCES

The National Deaf Domestic Violence Hotline

The Hotline (855)-812-1001 (24/7 VP)

<https://dawnncanada.net/projects/naas/>

National Accommodation and Accessibility Survey

<https://dawnncanada.net/projects/naas/>

CANADIAN COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

<https://ccbnational.net/>

Supporting Deaf & DeafBlind Survivors

<https://reachingvictims.org/resource/working-with-deaf-deafblind-survivors/>

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