

**If you are an
immigrant woman
with precarious
status,**

**this brochure
may be for you.**

Is this you?

- I came to Canada to join my spouse, who is also my sponsor.
- I came to Canada to work as a caregiver.
- I came to Canada to apply for asylum.
- I have no legal status in Canada.
- I live in hiding.
- I have to work as a prostitute.
- I have little education.
- I have a job I am overqualified for and that is poorly paid.
- I rarely or never go out. I see few people apart from my spouse and children. I feel isolated.
- I find it difficult to communicate in French or English.



In this brochure, the word “spouse” indicates any person with whom you have or have had an intimate and committed relationship.

Is this someone you know?



I stay with my spouse because:

- Marriage is very important to me.
- I love him and he loves me.
- I'm afraid he'll stop sponsoring me and I'll be deported from Canada.
- I'm afraid my children will be taken away.
- I have no money and I'm afraid of having no place to live.
- I'm afraid he'll take revenge and report me and I'll be arrested.
- I don't know anyone else in Canada.
- I don't know the law or what services there are to help me.
- I don't have a visa, passport, or work permit.
- I'm afraid he'll take away my identification papers.
- I am afraid of being rejected by my community, family, or my spouse's family if I leave him.
- I don't want doctors, police, government workers, or judges interfering in my private life.

Do things like this happen to

My spouse:

- Puts me down and humiliates me in front of my children or family, says I'm crazy, or reprimands me.
- Makes fun of me, ridicules things that I say or do, or makes me feel ashamed.
- Says I am a bad mother.
- Threatens to withdraw his sponsorship.
- Threatens to hurt people I love or take away my children.
- Won't let me accept help from an unknown person.
- Breaks or threatens to break objects I like or to take away things I need, such as the phone or computer that I use to communicate with my family.
- Always wants to know where I am.
- Criticizes my friends and family.
- Is constantly contacting me by phone, text, or email, or following me around even though we are no longer together.

YES?

These behaviours are all

This brochure

you?

Have you seen them happen to someone else?

I didn't know him that well. He had come back to our country for two months to get married. After that we were apart for two years. Since I arrived in Canada, he's been really unpleasant with me and our son and is always yelling at me. I don't dare complain to my family because they think I'm really lucky to be living in Canada.

examples of domestic violence.

is for you.

My spouse:

- Threatens to ruin my reputation.
- Uses crude language when talking to me, raises his voice, or makes threatening gestures.
- Pushes, slaps, pinches, chokes, burns, or kicks me, or pulls my hair or spits on me.
- Threatens to hurt or kill me.
- Forces me to have sexual or intimate relations against my will or threatens to go to prostitutes.
- Forces me into prostitution.
- Locks me up or takes away my identification papers.
- Controls my spending or spends all my money.
- Treats me like his slave.
- Threatens to kill himself, me, or my children.

Domestic violence and insidiously undermines intimate

Your spouse repeatedly says and does things that hurt you.

He tells you what to do. He demands obedience. He makes all your decisions for you. His goal is to control you and have power over you.

To keep you from leaving, he promises to change, but continues to humiliate you and be violent.

To control you, your spouse makes you doubt yourself and tries to confuse you by saying things are your fault or that you are violent.

To dominate you, your spouse is verbally and physically violent.

Not so long ago, he used to tell me how beautiful and nice I was all the time. We were happy to finally be living in the same country. Then I said I wanted to get a job. He wouldn't even listen. It was the same when I wanted to take a French course. I was shut up in the house all day. It was suffocating.

Domestic violence
Time, love, and better

starts gradually and committed relationships



Domestic violence
can occur in
heterosexual or
same-sex couples.

**doesn't stop by itself.
living conditions won't stop it either.**

A violent spouse looks like any other man and may hold a respectable position in society.

He may be well liked and nice with everyone else.

He does not necessarily have mental health, alcohol, money, or work problems.

He may belong to any community or practise any religion or none at all. This includes native-born Quebecers.

Domestic violence

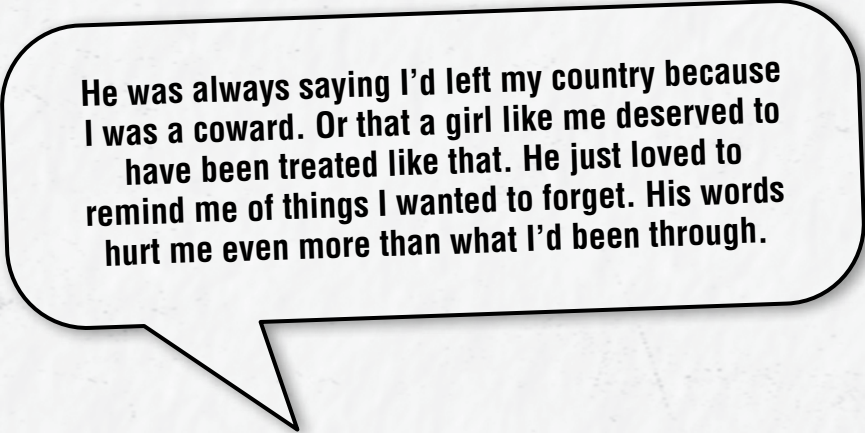
beatings and

Psychological violence is less visible, but just as devastating.

- Being put down, called crazy, or ridiculed about your body or sexuality.
- Having your movements controlled.
- Being prevented from seeing your friends or loved ones or threatened with not being able to contact them.
- Having your beliefs or spirituality infringed on.
- Being prevented from studying or learning French or English.
- Being threatened with deportation from Canada.

These are forms of domestic violence.

Psychological violence destroys your self-esteem.
You end up believing what your spouse says. You feel stupid or crazy.
You think you are the one to blame.



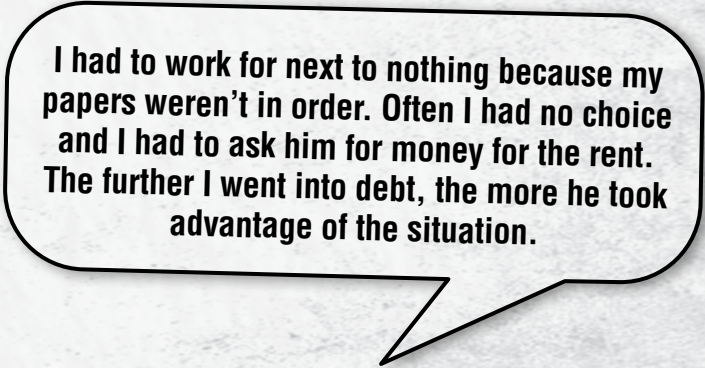
He was always saying I'd left my country because I was a coward. Or that a girl like me deserved to have been treated like that. He just loved to remind me of things I wanted to forget. His words hurt me even more than what I'd been through.

is not just physical injury

**Economic violence is less well known,
but just as humiliating.**

- Having to beg for money.
- Having your spending controlled.
- Being forced to pay for everything.
- Being forced to hand over all your money.
- Being prevented from getting a job.
- Having to work under degrading or humiliating conditions.
- Having to go into debt.

These are also forms of domestic violence.



I had to work for next to nothing because my papers weren't in order. Often I had no choice and I had to ask him for money for the rent. The further I went into debt, the more he took advantage of the situation.

**If you experience psychological or
economic violence, ask for help.**

**See the last page for organizations
that help immigrant women who
experience domestic violence.**

Among all some are

- **Threats**

Such as threats to harm or kill you.

- **Physical violence**

Such as arm twisting or hitting.

- **Criminal negligence**

Such as being deprived of care or food to the point where your life is at risk.

- **Sexual violence**

Such as being forced to engage in sexual relations or unwanted sexual behaviour.

- **Harassment**

Such as being constantly phoned or followed so that you fear for your safety.

- **Forcible confinement**

Such as being locked in a room or prevented from leaving the house.

If you experience any of these forms of violence, you can call 911 to report it and get protection.

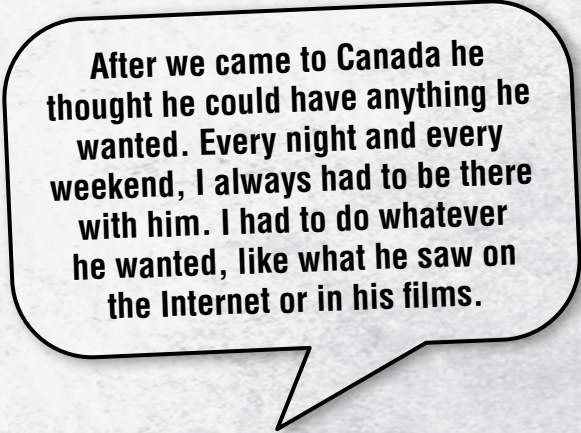
**You have a right
to security and respect.**

**These rights are guaranteed by the
Québec Charter of Human Rights and
Freedoms, and the Canadian Charter
of Rights and Freedoms.**

forms of violence considered crimes

Over time, forms of violence may evolve and add to one another.

Over time, the frequency and severity of violence can increase.



After we came to Canada he thought he could have anything he wanted. Every night and every weekend, I always had to be there with him. I had to do whatever he wanted, like what he saw on the Internet or in his films.

Here are some that might make you

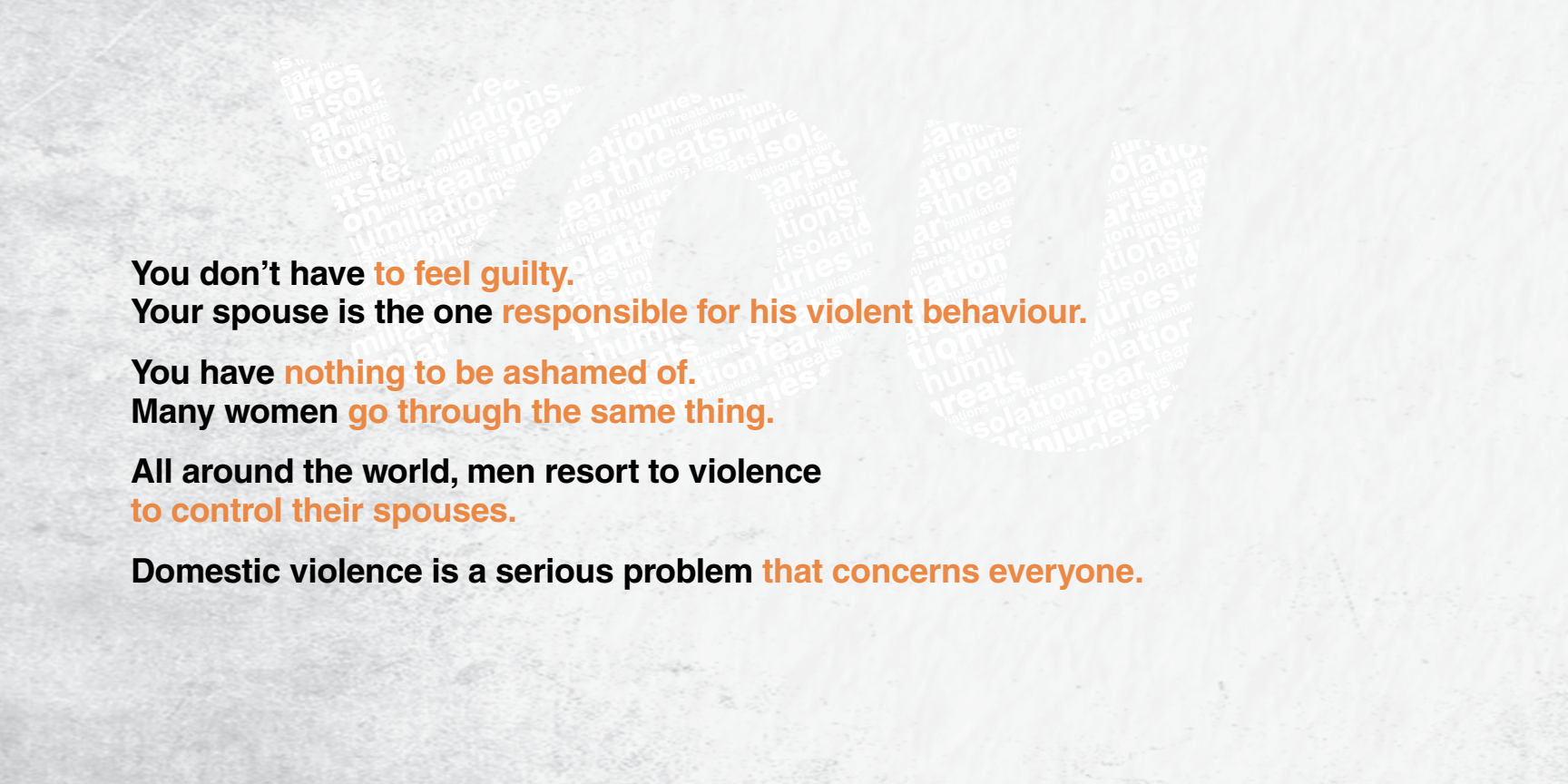
- I'm afraid and I want to stay alive.
- I want myself and my children to be safe.
- I don't want to face this alone anymore.
- I want someone to let my spouse know that he's not allowed to treat me this way.
- I need to feel respected.
- I need to talk, to relieve stress.
- I want to know about my rights and the immigration process.
- I want to regularize my status.
- I want a peaceful life with my family.
- I want to get my confidence and self-esteem back. I want to stop feeling guilty and ashamed.
- I want to find ways to protect myself, like arranging a signal to send to someone I trust to call 911 in an emergency.

**If your safety or the safety
don't hesitate**

of the reasons decide to seek help

I was so afraid he'd go after her. I didn't want her to, but my daughter saw everything. Day after day, she had to watch her mother being humiliated. I could see how scared she was, every time. I couldn't stand seeing her go through that anymore. I wanted to protect her.

of your loved ones is **threatened**,
to call 911.



You don't have to feel guilty.

Your spouse is the one responsible for his violent behaviour.

You have nothing to be ashamed of.

Many women go through the same thing.

**All around the world, men resort to violence
to control their spouses.**

Domestic violence is a serious problem that concerns everyone.

Don't face it alone.

**Talk to someone you trust,
like a health or education professional or a neighbour.**

**Even if you confide in someone,
you still have the right to make your own choices.**

**No one can force you
to leave your spouse or stay with him.**

Do you know an immigrant woman with precarious If she trusts you,

Listen without judging

Believe her

Women with precarious immigration status may have trouble confiding in another person or revealing domestic violence for a number of reasons.

They may be:

- Afraid of being judged because they don't speak French or English
- Ashamed to talk about a problem they see as private
- Afraid they will be judged or disbelieved, particularly if they have experienced discrimination or racism

It takes a lot of courage to talk. The best way to help is to listen without judging and try to understand the obstacles she faces.

status who is experiencing domestic violence? you can help

Tell her it's not her fault

Immigrant women with precarious status often see themselves as the guardians of their culture and families. They may feel guilty and see themselves as dishonouring their spouse and breaking up the family unit. Others feel guilty because they feel responsible for ruining the plan to reunite the family in Canada.

Victims often feel responsible for their spouse's violent behaviour. Violent spouses are often experts at blaming the victim and denying their own violent behaviour, particularly if they get support from their families or communities.

Tell the victim that it's her spouse who is responsible for his violent actions.

It's his violent behaviour that is breaking up the family.

Respect her choices and let her go at her own pace

Domestic violence is devastating. The road to restoring self-confidence and taking back control of one's life can be long.

Here are some of the reasons that can lead an immigrant woman with precarious status to tolerate violence:

- The hope of restoring a loving relationship
- Fear of being deported from Canada
- Lack of knowledge of resources and rights
- Fear of police and the justice system
- Fear of losing her children or being abandoned without support

Try to understand her experience and respect her choices. Whether she leaves her spouse or not, you can point her toward resources to help her understand her situation better. (See the last page of this brochure.)

Offer your support

Isolation plays a big part in domestic violence. This isolation is often greater for immigrant women with precarious status, who may have lost their original social network and have had to learn new cultural norms and values. Many are struggling to survive, even though they have come to Canada in search of safety.

Offer the victim your support. Talk with her. Let her know she has the right to confidential assistance. If she wants to know more, show her this brochure. If she wants, offer to go with her when she seeks help.

Fight prejudice and invisibility

Many people think that immigrant women accept domestic violence because of their culture or religion. This is false. They simply encounter more obstacles than other women in dealing with it. In Canada, immigrant women with precarious status face many challenges that make them more vulnerable to domestic violence.

The more isolated the victim, the more abusive her spouse can be. Be open and, above all, don't turn your back on her.

**Remember, domestic violence
feeds on indifference...**

RESOURCES
CALL FROM ANYWHERE
IN QUÉBEC
24 HOURS A DAY,
7 DAYS A WEEK

SOS domestic violence
1-800-363-9010

(calls from outside Montréal) (Voice and TTY)

514-873-9010

(in Montréal) (Voice and TTY)

SOS domestic violence knows where immigrant women with precarious status can find help.

This free, confidential, and anonymous telephone service specializes in domestic violence. With one call, victims, their loved ones, and witnesses can **immediately** get information, counselling, and accommodation services.

Produced by the **Secrétariat à la condition féminine**.
Written by the **Table de concertation en violence conjugale de Montréal**,
with the **collaboration of:**

- The Italian Women's Centre of Montréal (www.centrifim.org)
- Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes (Comité femmes and Comité d'aide aux réfugiés) (www.fcrl.qc.ca).

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911 Emergency services

For immediate assistance if you are in danger or are a witness to violence.

911 (Voice) (TTY available in some regions)

310-4141 (in municipalities where 911 is not available)

***4141** (for cell phone calls)

Info-Santé

For information and referrals, such as CLSCs and other health and social services centres (CSSSs)

811 (Voice)

This brochure is available in French, English and Spanish.
Please contact the Secrétariat à la condition féminine (SCF)
at **418-643-9052**.

These brochures are also available on the SCF (www.scf.gouv.qc.ca) and the Table de concertation en violence conjugale de Montréal (www.tcvcm.ca) websites as a PDF document in English, French or Spanish. Word versions are available in these languages and some others. They can be found on the SCF website under the Publications tab.