

# Ethnicity and Violence

“My fear of losing custody of my children, deportation or loss of residency status makes me stay in abusive relationships for years”.

*(Connecting Voices, 2007)*

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## Prevalence

Significant data gaps exist regarding the prevalence of violence experienced by immigrant and visible minority women.

It is estimated that 11% of immigrant and visible minority women experience emotional or financial violence and 4% experience physical or sexual violence. These numbers are very conservative due to cultural and language barriers that ultimately impact reporting.

Women of colour may be more vulnerable to sexual assault because of racial stereotypes.

## Discrimination and Hate Crimes

In Canada, race and ethnicity is the most common motivation for committing a hate crime.

Approximately 60,000 hate crimes are committed annually in Canada's major urban centers. Sixty-one percent of these hate crimes are committed against racial minorities, 23% against religious minorities, 11% against groups of different sexual orientation, and 5% against ethnic minorities.

## Social and Economic Barriers

Immigrant and refugee women who experience violence face many unique social and economic barriers to accessing services. Some of these barriers include:

- \*Most immigrant communities view wife assault as taboo;
- \*Inability to communicate in Canada's official languages;
- \*Unaware of their rights in Canada;
- \*Unaware of how law enforcement and court systems operate;
- \*Fear of deportation by immigrant authorities if they report violence;
- \*Unavailability of interpreters when violence is reported. Often information is gathered by law enforcement officials through conversations with the abusive partner. This may lead to distortions in relevant case information;
- \*Unaware that they are eligible for child support and other government financial assistance if they leave the abusive relationship;
- \*Lack of social networks.

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