

# Considerations when working with Newcomer Women

Although immigrant, refugee, and non-status women experience the same forms of violence in their intimate relationships as those experienced by

Canadian-born women, they also face particular barriers. A newcomer woman abused by her spouse or partner may suffer forms of abuse unique to the newcomer experience.

One form of abuse faced uniquely by immigrant, refugee and non-status women is the threat of reporting them to the immigration authorities and having them deported. Many women fear deportation even if they have the right to remain in Canada, because their partner may keep them uninformed of their full rights.

Immigration, refugee and sponsorship processes often put one partner in a position of power over the other. The reinforcement of power imbalances works in favour of an abusive partner or spouse.

Newcomer women also face particular barriers to accessing justice and services. This often takes the form of lack of access to information on their legal rights and recourse, as a result of isolation or language barriers. Newcomer women in situations of violence also sometimes fall through the cracks between women's organizations and settlement organizations due to a lack of awareness and training of front-line workers regarding the particular vulnerabilities and problems they face.



Source: [crrweb.ca/en/violence-against-women](http://crrweb.ca/en/violence-against-women)

# How immigration status can affect women in situations of violence or abuse



**Women** already in Canada **who are sponsored by a spouse** may be threatened that their spouse will withdraw the sponsorship if the woman doesn't "behave". The sponsoring spouse does have the right to withdraw a sponsorship in process up to the moment that the woman is granted permanent residence. This form of control over the woman is often used by abusive spouses to make the woman stay in the relationship.

If a **refugee claimant woman** is being abused by her spouse or partner during the refugee process, she often doesn't know that she has the right to separate her refugee claim from his. Some women believe that they will be granted refugee status only if they stay with their abuser, particularly if their claims are based on similar circumstances. Women often don't know that they have the right to ask that their refugee claim be reopened if they have been denied the opportunity to tell their story during the hearing.

**Non-status women** are particularly vulnerable when experiencing abuse because they have no legal status. This often makes them too afraid to call the police when a domestic violence incident occurs. They fear that police involvement will lead to deportation. Also, many women are afraid to access any social services because they fear that their lack of status could become known.

**Immigrant women** with status may be manipulated by their partner in various ways that are unique to the newcomer experience. For example, her spouse or partner may prohibit her from learning English/French or from working, keep her isolated in the home, threaten to take custody of the children, threaten to alienate her from their cultural community by telling people she is a bad wife/mother, etc.

\*\*\*\*\*

Both women whose sponsorship is withdrawn while in process and women without status have the right to apply to remain in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. However, a woman needs a settlement worker or lawyer to assist her in gathering evidence, understanding the legal requirements she must meet, preparing the application, etc. Such applications are not always accepted and there is no automatic protection from deportation while the application is being studied.

Source: [ccrweb.ca/en/violence-against-women](http://ccrweb.ca/en/violence-against-women)