

COSTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

When women are abused, there are costs to the victim, her family and to society. Witnesses pointed out that taxpayers pay significant sums of money in medical costs to doctors' offices, hospital emergency wards, and mental health clinics; in criminal justice costs for police services, courts and corrections; and, in social service costs for welfare, housing, and day care. As well, given that women are a major part of the labour force, employers pay for violence against women in high absenteeism costs and low productivity rates.

The physical effects on women who experience violence include broken bones, internal injuries, bruises, black eyes, burns, bites, lacerations, knife and gun shot wounds, and death. The psychological effects of violence are significant as well. It has been well-documented that women who are abused by a man with whom they are in an intimate relationship typically suffer from low self-esteem, fear, loss of control, and isolation. They internalize blame and minimize the impact of the violence. They perceive that they have limited options for setting their lives on a new course and their negative self-worth keeps them dependent and passive. Women who have been sexually assaulted are approximately five times more likely to have a nervous breakdown, six times more likely to attempt suicide, and eight times more likely to commit suicide or die prematurely (5:8).

Witnesses from the Addiction Research Foundation presented the Committee with research findings from an Ontario study of randomly selected women over 18 living with a male partner. The research shows that physical and sexual violence against women and children causes emotional trauma that leads to alcohol and drug abuse by the victim as a means of easing the physical and emotional pain (9:21).

Compared to women who have not been physically or sexually abused as children, 50% more women who were physically abused as children by either parent use drugs to sleep, and 100% more use drugs to calm down. Women sexually abused as children are twice as likely as other women to use drugs to sleep, and three times as likely to use drugs to calm down.