

# EQUALITY WITH REGARD TO THE SECURITY, INTEGRITY AND DIGNITY OF THE PERSON

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## HARASSMENT

[Harassment](#) occurs when an individual's conduct impinges upon the dignity or physical or psychological health of one or more people. Harassment can involve mainly words, as in jokes about a person's sexual orientation, their belonging to a visible minority or aspects of their culture. People have access to resources to put a stop to such situations, whether these involve [bullying at school](#) or [sexual or psychological harassment at work](#).

## CONJUGAL VIOLENCE

[Conjugal violence](#) exists in all societies and social classes. It takes place within the context of present or past romantic relationships. It can exist among adult couples as well as in relationships between young people.

In Québec, conjugal violence is not a private matter but constitutes a serious and complex societal problem with many dimensions. It is particularly insidious in that it has considerable consequences on human, social and economic levels. And it also has repercussions on the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of children who are exposed to it.

Conjugal violence does not result from a loss of control; on the contrary, it is an attempt to obtain control over, dominate or maintain a hold over another person. It is not the same as a simple argument or conflict between spouses. It happens gradually, over time, and can be very subtle.

This type of violence is manifested in series of repeated actions that generally lead to an escalation by way of threats, derogatory remarks, bullying or insults. It can also take the form of attempts to isolate someone socially, undue surveillance, restrictions on movement, the use of physical force (hitting, throwing things, forcing a person into non-consensual sexual relations) or psychological manipulation.

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## CONJUGAL VIOLENCE (CONT.)

The police are trained to deal with such situations, to protect victims along with those close to them and to steer them toward resources designed to shield and protect them. When an incident of conjugal violence is reported to the police and criminal prosecution is authorized by the [Directeur des poursuites criminelles et pénales](#) (in French only), this legal action is intended to ensure the safety of the victim and the victim's family, to break the cycle of violence, to make the perpetrators take responsibility for their violent behaviour and to prevent relapses.

There are many services available throughout Québec, particularly in terms of psychosocial intervention, support and translation services. Across the province, women's shelters (members of the [Regroupement des maisons pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale](#) (in French only) and the [Fédération des maisons d'hébergement pour femmes](#)) provide shelter for women who have been victims of conjugal violence, along with their children. The Secrétariat à la condition féminine also publishes brochures for people living in precarious situations due to conjugal violence. [These brochures](#) are in various languages.

In addition, there are [services specifically for violent spouses](#) (in French only), who also need help. There are recourses for victims of conjugal violence who are sponsored or without legal status.

Finally, the [SOS Violence Conjugale helpline](#) (in French only) offers free, anonymous and confidential services to victims of conjugal violence 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The number to call is 1-800-363-9010.

Whatever your status, whether you are sponsored or not, [you do not have to stay in an abusive relationship](#).

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## “HONOUR” CRIMES

According to UN Women, the definition of an “[honour](#)” crime must be broad enough to encompass “honour”-based violence in all its forms, such as murder, attempted murder, driving a woman to suicide, rape, gang rape, torture, assault, virginity testing, kidnapping, forced marriage, forced eviction, harassment, threats, stove burnings, acid attacks and maiming.

“A definition of ‘honour’-based violence should reflect three basic elements:

1. control, or desire to exert control, over a woman’s behaviour;
2. a male’s feeling of shame over his loss of control, or perceived loss of control, over her behavior, and;
3. community or familial involvement in augmenting and addressing this shame.”

The Conseil du statut de la femme has documented the situation in a brief that placed the issue of [honour crimes](#) within the context of immigration and recommended ways to address it.

In Canada, most of these situations constitute infractions that can lead to the prosecution of the perpetrators under the *Criminal Code*.

The police can help anyone who fears for their safety or their life. The number to call is 911.

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## SEXUAL ASSAULT AND EXPLOITATION

Sexual assault is a criminal act that “is sexual in nature, with or without physical contact, committed by an individual without the consent of the victim, or in some cases, through emotional manipulation or blackmail. It is an act that subjects another person to the perpetrator’s desires through an abuse of power, and/or the use of force or coercion, and/or implicit or explicit threats.”

This act of abuse takes all choice away from the victim. It constitutes an infringement and violation of the person’s sexual integrity, an act motivated by the desire for power and control. Marital or common law status, romantic relationships and the bonds of family and friends in no way mitigate the criminal character of this type of aggression.

Sexual assault has harmful consequences for the health, development and well-being not only of the victims but also of those close to them.

The Québec government recognizes sexual exploitation as a manifestation of the abuse of power and considers it a form of violence that targets women and girls. It generally involves a situation, context or relationship in which an individual takes advantage of another person’s vulnerability or dependency and uses the body of this person sexually for the purposes of personal, social or monetary advantage.

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## SEXUAL ASSAULT AND EXPLOITATION (CONT.)

Police officers are trained to intervene appropriately in such cases. A person who has been subjected to or witnessed an act of sexual assault or a situation of sexual exploitation can report it to the police along with the circumstances behind it. If, at the end of a police investigation, the [Directeur des poursuites criminelles et pénales](#) (in French only) institutes criminal proceedings against the perpetrator, the costs of these proceedings are assumed by the State, not the victim.

A variety of services are offered throughout Québec to adults and minors who are or have been victims of sexual assault and exploitation. The [Crime Victims Assistance Centres](#) along with the [Regroupement québécois des Centres d'aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel](#) (CALACS) are equipped to offer the necessary support and information.

In addition, the website of the Secrétariat à la condition féminine has an [Information Guide for Sexual Assault Victims](#). A telephone hotline offering information and referral services is also offered for victims of sexual assault and exploitation and those close to them. This toll-free, bilingual and confidential service is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from anywhere in Québec. The number is 1-888-933-9007. .

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## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Immigrants can sometimes find themselves in vulnerable situations due to their precarious status (citizenship, residency), distance from family and friends, or dependency on sponsors. This set of circumstances makes them potential targets of human trafficking for the purposes of [sexual exploitation](#) or [forced labour](#). For a variety of reasons including social isolation, withholding of passports, violence and the threat of being detained or sent back to their country of origin, they risk falling under the control of individuals, gangs or organized crime networks.

The United Nations states clearly that [human trafficking is a crime](#). It is a human rights violation that threatens national security and constitutes an obstacle to sustainable development and the rule of law. Moreover, Canada has adopted a [National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking](#).

The Canadian [Criminal Code of Canada](#) states: “every person who recruits, transports, transfers, receives, holds, conceals or harbours a person, or exercises control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation is guilty of an indictable offence.” Other related actions are also considered crimes.

Human trafficking results in significant physical, psychological and emotional trauma for the victims. That is why it is important to bring it to light by reporting it to the police. They can take measures to ensure the victims’ safety and put a stop to the crimes committed against them.

Help can also be obtained by calling the [Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline](#) at 1-833-900-1010. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, it provides services in over 200 languages. For security reasons, consulting the website leaves no traces on your computer.

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## **VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS**

### *Toward children*

The [Youth Protection Act](#) is intended to protect minors whose safety or development is or may be compromised. It should be noted that, according to this law, a child is a person under 18 years of age.

Parents have primary responsibility for their children, but certain problems can prevent them from exercising this responsibility. The [Director of Youth Protection](#) intervenes whenever a child has been abandoned, is at serious risk of being neglected or physically, sexually or psychologically abused, or when their development is compromised. For example, the DYP can also intervene in cases where a child is not attending school or is absent too often.

In Canada, the [law](#) prohibits disciplining children by means such as hitting them in the head or face, using an object to hit them on any part of the body or using physical discipline out of anger. Other types of practices may be harmful to children's physical integrity. For example, [female genital mutilation and infibulation](#) are criminal acts and those who perpetrate them are liable to criminal prosecution and imprisonment.

[Integrated health and social services centres](#) (CISSS) provide their services to anyone who needs them. Anyone who witnesses a situation involving child abuse or who fears that a child may be a victim of one of these forms of violence should contact the Director of Youth Protection; they do not have to fear that their identity will be revealed. The DYP can launch an investigation and protect and shelter the child. Such inquiries are carried out in conjunction with the police and all action taken will be on behalf of the child and in their best interest.

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## VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS (CONT.)

### *Toward seniors or persons with disabilities*

As its name suggests, the [\*Act to combat maltreatment of seniors and other persons of full age in vulnerable situations\*](#) provides measures to support seniors and people with disabilities and those close to them. This law is intended to [combat maltreatment](#), particularly in situations where people are victims of sexual or physical violence or breach of trust designed to take money from them. The law also provides for concerted effort by various public organizations to put a stop to maltreatment of seniors or any other persons of full age in precarious situations.

Among the various [resources](#) available is the [Elder Mistreatment Helpline](#) (in French only), which is toll-free and available every day of the week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The number is 1-888-489-2287. In cases of mistreatment or violence affecting a person with a disability, contact the [Office des personnes handicapées du Québec](#).