

Shifts in Culture: Masculinity in the Canadian Context

The Allies in Action Project educates newcomers to Canada about domestic abuse/family violence and how to maintain healthy family relationships.

Every culture has different traditions for the roles of men and women, and different traits associated with being a man or woman. These traits might help men and women with their roles: for example, strong men might help them with protecting the family, or caring women might help them raise children in the home

Men learn how to be men from their culture, but also many other contexts. Men may be *socialized* or learn masculinity from different places, for example: religion, family, and media.

Cultures can be described in many ways. One way is through masculinity and femininity. This means how strongly the culture follows traditional roles for men and women. **Canada** values both traditional male and female traits, meaning men and women both contribute to work, home, and child-raising.

Challenges to immigration are different for men and women. When people immigrate or move cultures, men and women have to face a **change in roles**, especially within a family. This means learning **new roles** in Canada that are **different** from the home country.

This can be very difficult for some men. For example, men are often the providers while women are often the caretakers (of kids, elderly, household). When they move, both partners will likely share roles to deal with the changes in the new country.

Common shifts for men:

- Dealing with both partners working
- Contributing to taking care of the home and children
- Possible unemployment and low income
- These changes are difficult
- The day to day problems of immigration and acculturation
- Challenges the male identity – challenges what it means to be a man
- Lots of pressure

These difficulties are perpetuated (continued) through the **expectations of masculinity**.

- Not allowed to express emotion (especially sadness)
- Feeling ashamed or sad that they cannot provide enough

- Not good at house and child responsibilities
- Immigrant men often feel useless or powerless in the face of these difficulties. They may also feel angry or upset. They may feel alone, isolated, with no one to turn to for help. They may feel a great deal of pressure to fill their roles.

Relationship Between Masculinity and Violence

Boys are taught two things:

1. When your masculinity is challenged, you must react through anger, violence, and negativity, or else feel like you are not a man.
 - Men are rarely taught other ways of dealing with threat to masculinity.
2. That not following this type of masculinity will lead to shaming, guilt, embarrassment, low self-esteem, and exclusion

Immigration is one instance where masculinity and men's roles are challenged. Sometimes men might react violently, aggressively, or abuse their spouses and children because of the shift in roles.

For refugee-claimants: the abused partner has the right to separate their claim.

- Permanent resident status: people of PR status cannot lose that status or forced to leave Canada because of domestic abuse, even if their abusive partner sponsored them
- A woman who has her sponsorship withdrawn while in the PR application process or a woman without immigration status has the right to remain in Canada on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.