



2025

SCARBOROUGH
WOMEN'S
CENTRE

Donor Information Guide



Table of Contents

About Us	1
Supporting Scarborough Women's Centre	4
Shame Must Change Sides	7
Our Mission: Tackling Gender-Based Violence	8
Employment & Violence Overview	12
SWC Promotes Positive Change for Women	15
Contact	19



About Us

What drives the people behind SWC? It's a question often pondered by patrons as managers, frontline staff, and volunteers who continue to dedicate their time, energy, and passion to women in need in the city of Toronto.

Our History and Mission

Established in 1982 as a community-based non-profit organization, the Scarborough Women's Centre (SWC) has been committed to supporting women in their pursuit of safety and independence. At the heart of SWC's mission lies the dedication and passion of its staff and volunteers. Collectively, these individuals are committed to creating a secure and empowering space—one where women can become empowered and independent.

One staff member named S said this about SWC's impact:

"SWC is a safety hub for the women in the community. I think that's the biggest part of our impact—our service users come here with peace of mind, knowing they'll get the support they need."

The Impact of SWC: Beyond helping women in need

SWC also shapes the careers and perspectives of those who work within it. Many staff members and volunteers describe their experience as a placement that instilled essential skills in communication and comprehension without judgment to create meaningful and lasting change.

“There have been so many essential skills I gained while working as a student that I now use in my position—how to communicate with service users, being empathetic, and actively listening are just a few,” shared C, reflecting on their experience.

What resonates deeply within SWC is a shared sentiment: this is not just a job—it’s about creating positive and empowering relationships that last beyond the services provided.

A Shared Vision

The staff and volunteers of SWC are united by a shared vision of creating a better future for women—one defined by resilience, empowerment, and meaningful change. Through their passion, stories, and unwavering commitment, they are shaping individual futures and strengthening communities where women can reclaim their independence with confidence and dignity.

A Message to Our Donors: Partners in Change

This shared vision is only made possible through the unwavering support of our donors. Your generosity and belief in our mission fuel SWC's ability to provide vital programs, a safe haven, and empowering resources to women in need. Every contribution you make helps transform lives, enabling women to build a brighter, more independent future.

From everyone at SWC, thank you for being an essential part of this journey. Your support empowers us to deliver life-changing assistance, foster community resilience, and create lasting impact. Together, we are crafting a future where every woman can step forward with confidence, strength, and hope.





Supporting Scarborough Women's Centre

Scarborough Women's Centre provides women with the tools to empower themselves and thrive in their communities, safe from violence.

Over the last four decades our organization has aided more than **175,000** women and children from all walks of life with free resources. We educate, support, and assist women through these services:

- *Anonymous, confidential information and referrals*
- *Webinars and workshops on freedom from violence, skill development, emotional health, and finances*
- *Supportive mentoring and English literacy mentoring with trained volunteers*
- *Counselling for economic and emotional independence*
- *Safety planning for emergency escapes from abuse and creating safe living environments*
- *Programs teaching young women how to build strong futures and become leaders*
- *Programs helping women with disabilities with relationships, self-care, and developing skills for the workforce*
- *Interpreters and language tutoring for newcomers*

What You've Helped Accomplish

In 2023-2024 alone, we were able to help **3558** women and young women. We have aided them in finding employment, gaining the confidence to flee their abusers, and becoming emotionally independent.

This is only possible thanks to you. Over half of our funding comes from donations, with corporations and groups accounting for 35% of our annual funds.

We have accomplished great things since our start in 1982, with the newest advancement being the Supporting Aging Scarborough Sisters (SASS) Focus groups that encourage gender equality for senior women. But while reflecting on our achievements, we must also look towards the future.

With your help we will continue to empower women by:

- *Improving our programs and services, both in person and virtually, to meet community needs that have shifted since the Covid-19 pandemic*
- *Encouraging gender equity for women*
- *Strengthening alliances with our local communities to guarantee we deliver what is needed*

Why We Need Your Help...

Why We Need Your Help

We rely on donors like you. Without your contributions, we cannot properly serve the community, and women will:

- *Remain trapped in abusive situations due to lack of knowledge and financial security*
- *Be kept isolated and unable to find support*
- *Be unable to build skills for future development and finding employment*

Thousands more women can be helped by the Scarborough Women's Centre with your donation. Support women today by clicking the links below.

<https://www.scarboroughwomenscentre.ca/donate/> for individual or group gifts

<https://www.scarboroughwomenscentre.ca/your-corporation-can-support-scarborough-womens-centre/> for corporate donations



“Shame must change sides”

- Gisèle Pélicot

Every year in Canada, 80% of cases of domestic violence go unreported. Only 19% of women victims of spousal violence report to authorities.

There are many reasons behind women's reluctance to seek protection, including mistrust in the judicial system and possible retaliation from their abusers. At the same time, there is a particularly insidious reason that keeps women from seeking help: shame.

Women are conditioned to believe that to admit to one's abuse is to confess to one's shame and that being a victim is disgraceful, even though, by definition, every victim of abuse is a survivor whose strength and resilience ought to be admired and honored.

The stigma surrounding violence against women is designed to keep women from coming forward, sharing their stories, and getting the support they deserve. It's time to change.

Here at SWC, we believe that no woman should feel ashamed. Wherever there is abuse, it's never the victim who should feel ashamed. It's the perpetrator. As Gisèle Pélicot said: “It is not for us to have shame, it is for them.”

SWC is proud to provide the material resources that will help women break free from the burden of society-imposed shame, thereby positioning itself as part of a global dialogue that is re-shaping the way we think about abuse and victimhood. Instead of retreating into the shadows of shame, we encourage women everywhere to embrace their strength, courage, and resilience.



Our Mission: Tackling Gender-Based Violence

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender, gender identity, or perceived gender roles. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, financial, and economic harm, such as harassment, assault, coercion, negligence, and deprivation of liberty, making it a violation of human rights.

GBV affects more women and girls globally, regardless of age, race, or socioeconomic status. It can occur anywhere—at home, school, or work.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 1 in 3 women worldwide experiences physical or sexual abuse in her lifetime. The Canadian Women's Foundation (2022) reported high rates of intimate partner violence, with a woman or girl killed every 48 hours and marginalized groups facing greater risks.

A 2023 report by Statistics Canada titled *"Trends in Police-Reported Family Violence and Intimate Partner Violence in Canada"* showed a drastic increase in reported GBV cases. Illustrated in Figure 1, **"Gender-based violence"** is most often used to refer to **"Violence against women"**. The statistics presented here include only officially reported cases. The actual numbers are estimated to be far higher.

rate per 100,000 population

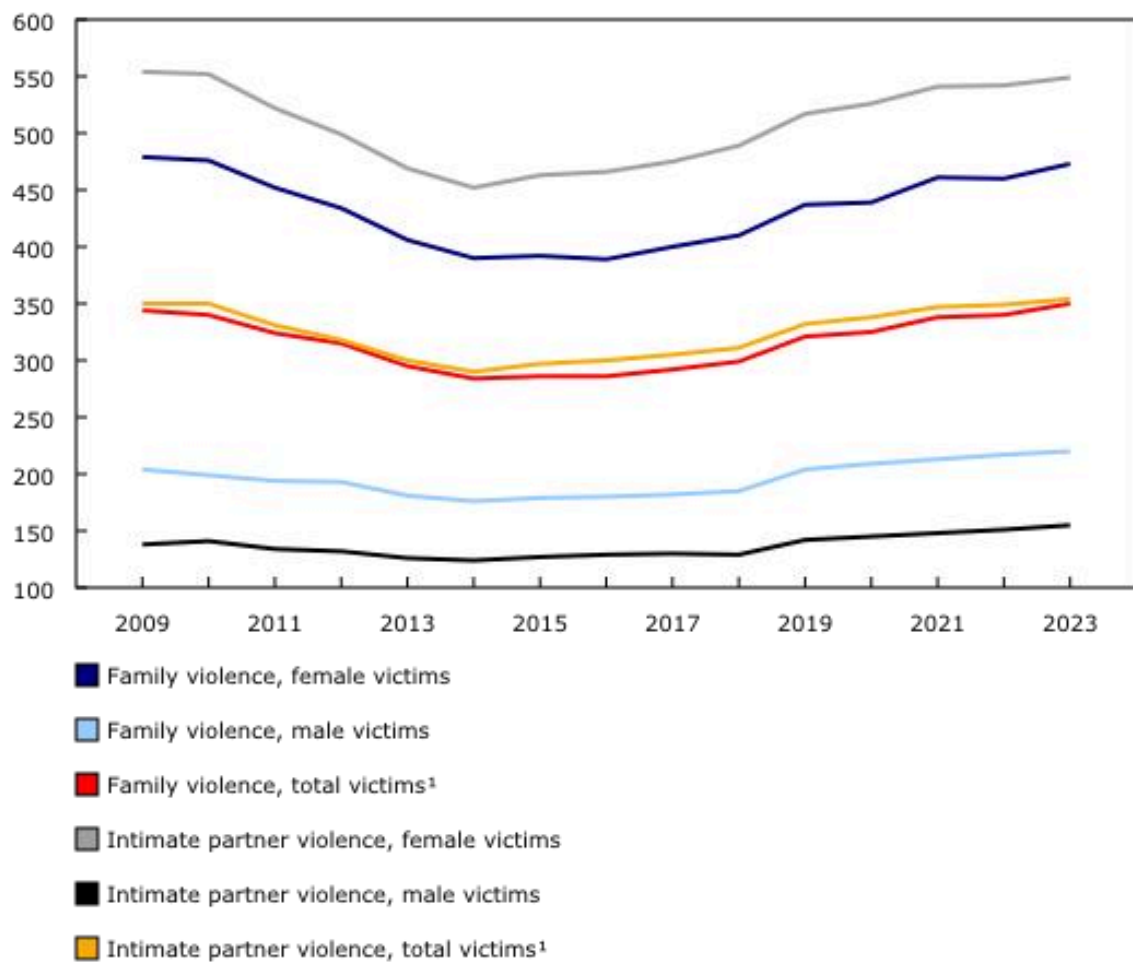


Figure 1 Victims of police-reported family violence and intimate partner violence, by type of violence, gender and year, Canada, 2009 to 2023 (Statistics Canada)

Scarborough Women's Centre's role in combating Gender-Based Violence

The Scarborough Women's Centre (SWC) helps women rebuild their lives with dignity, independence, and confidence.

For over four decades, SWC has been a lifeline for survivors, providing them with the tools and support necessary to recover from trauma, regain control over their lives, and work toward self-sufficiency. Since its establishment in 1982, the center has supported over 175,000 women and children, helping them navigate the challenges of gender-based violence through education, counseling, mentorship, skills training, and access to critical resources. Thousands of women benefit from SWC's programs each year, making it a pillar of empowerment in the Scarborough community and beyond.

To address the complex needs of survivors, SWC provides a range of specialized services:

- 1.** Counselling
- 2.** Mentoring
- 3.** Webinars & Workshops
- 4.** Info & Referrals

Expanding Support: The "Supporting Ageing Scarborough Sisters" Initiative

As part of its ongoing commitment to gender equality, SWC has recently launched the "Supporting Ageing Scarborough Sisters" initiative. This project focuses on empowering senior women by addressing challenges such as financial insecurity, social isolation, and vulnerability to abuse or neglect. Through this initiative, SWC aims to provide targeted resources, community support, and advocacy for older women, ensuring they can lead independent and fulfilling lives.

SWC stands unique:

- All the services provided by SWC are free.
- No waitlists for referrals or workshops.
- First counseling appointment within a month.
- The only service of its kind in East Toronto, serving a high-need community.



Employment & Violence Overview

Financial Hurdles to Independence

Leaving an unhealthy relationship is only the first of many steps a woman faces when trying to re-gain her independence. Obtaining meaningful employment, finding housing, and becoming financially independent are steps that can take months to years.

The Scarborough Women's Centre provides many resources to guide these women on the path to reclaiming their power. Most notably, many of these resources are targeted towards women who may be facing extra difficulties such as disabilities, single parenthood, lack of work experience, age, and language barriers.

Difficulties in the Digital Age

In the digital age, many job applications are online and workers are expected to have an active social media presence in order to connect with potential employers, such as a LinkedIn profile. This can be dangerous for women who have left abusive partners and are trying to keep their locations private – a hurdle in their job search as they cannot safely apply for work the same way that others can.

Additionally, many women who flee their abusers may not have the skills to compete in the job market. Whether they stayed at home raising kids or were deliberately isolated, many women lack the education or experience.

Women Want to Work

Achieving independence has a different meaning for every woman. It can range from learning to heal from trauma, finding support groups, or achieving financial independence through gainful employment.

56% of the women who visit SWC do not currently have employment. **59%** of them have a household income of less than \$25,000, which is well below the poverty threshold. From the 2,136 individuals that contacted the information referral program, **28.5%** of them inquired about education/employment training.

How SWC can Help

The Up Skills for Work Program provided by SWC helps women in need to gain the skills needed to enter (or re-enter) the workforce. SWC also runs an Outreach to Women with Disabilities Program. This program was launched in 2007 as a response to the large gap in services for women with disabilities.

The resources are provided in different formats such as workshops, self-directed courses, and downloadable materials. This is particularly important for women with disabilities and women with children who do not have the capability to attend in-person workshops.

Our Track Record

With the help of SWC, Centennial College and our generous donors, women have been able to grow their employable skills through free educational workshops and courses. In 2024, the education program enrolled 560 participants.

That's **560** women who can now apply their newfound skills to the workforce and reclaim their independence.

The Big Picture

When we aid those around us, we aid our communities, our economies, and ourselves.

By contributing to SWC you can help women in need to escape violence and live the lives they deserve.



SWC Promotes Positive Change For Women

Becoming Canadian: Serena's Path to Confidence and Community

Serena came to Canada seeking a better life for her family. She was determined to use her skills and optimism to succeed. Following the advice of a relative, Serena, her husband and their children settled in Scarborough. As it happened, adapting to a new country, its culture, and language was emotionally challenging for her while also dealing with intense homesickness.

Family struggles

As her children started school and learned English, Serena struggled to grasp its unfamiliar accent and pace. Even navigating messages from school was a challenge, and she often had to ask for help. Her children soon became insulting and dismissive of her. Ashamed of their new immigrant status, her son Johnny started to act out at school to try and fit in. All this felt isolating.

Meanwhile, Serena's husband had found work driving a cab, which made him unhappy. However, as the money problems increased and her job search was unsuccessful, she became envious: at least he had a job!

The turning point

When Serena found out about [Scarborough Women's Centre](#), she discovered a welcoming place that understood the challenges of being a [newcomer](#). Serena found that she could discuss her concerns and get help to figure out her next steps as countless other women had before her.

Serena started with counselling at the SWC, where she learned to express herself and gained confidence in her conversational skills. Over several months, she worked through the negative emotions that she had avoided sharing with her family.

A community of support

During this time, Serena was introduced to one of the Centre's many [volunteers](#), who met with her to practice her English. Their connection led to a circle of new friends and happy experiences. Serena had found a new community, and she was finally “becoming Canadian.”

Re-discovering herself

The self-esteem [workshops](#) conducted at SWC empowered Serena to contribute to the community as she had done back home. She soon began studying at the community college to obtain the Canadian qualifications needed in her desired field. Pursuing her goals inspired her children and improved the atmosphere at home. SWC helped to strengthen Serena so she could find her footing—and establish herself as a proud Canadian!

Melina's Journey: From Heartbreak to Healing and Happiness

When Melina married Eric, she thought it would be a life of unending love and care. But her marriage had turned out to be anything but that. Eric isolated her from friends and refused to allow her to work. His cruelty became increasingly tangible when they had children, as he would often humiliate and belittle her as a person and as a mother. He would often disappear and didn't leave money for food or milk. And then one day he left and never came back.

Devastation and determination

Melina was devastated and didn't know what to do until a sympathetic neighbour suggested that she could find help at the [Scarborough Women's Centre](#). Little did she know it would change the direction of her life.

Determined to save her young family, she reached out to SWC. The friendly voice on the phone helped Melina apply for social assistance and find the nearest food bank. With her necessities addressed, she could finally start to think about the future.

Finding clarity and courage

Over several months, the weekly [counselling](#) service at SWC helped Melina cope with her situation and gain a sense of confidence for herself and her children. She gained clarity and courage to take on bigger steps.

Melina took advantage of Centre [resources](#), like the Building Self-esteem course, and went on to take multiple personal development workshops. She started discovering strengths she didn't know she had that would ultimately help her succeed. She connected with a supportive network of people at SWC who understood her journey.

Healing and a happy home

Healing and a happy home

Melina worked hard to obtain her nursing qualifications and soon became able to support her family independently. She appreciates how far she's come, the valued role she plays in society, and the ability to give her kids the love and care they deserve. She credits the community and resources available at the Scarborough Women's Centre for helping her survive and give her kids a happy and safe home.



Contact Us

Scarborough Women's Centre

Address

2100 Ellesmere Rd, Suite 245
Scarborough, Ontario M1H 3B7

Hours

Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

Phone

416-439-7111

Email

ed@scarboroughwomenscentre.ca

CRA Charitable Registration #

10795-9660-RR0001