

# Frequently Asked Questions

## *About the White Ribbon Campaign*

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### **What is the White Ribbon Campaign?**

The White Ribbon Campaign (WRC) is the largest effort in the world of men working to end violence against women (VAW). In over fifty-five countries, campaigns are led by both men and women, even though the focus is on educating men and boys. In some countries it is a general public education effort focused on ending violence against women.



### **How did the WRC get started?**

In 1991, a handful of men in Canada decided they had a responsibility to urge men to speak out about violence against women. Wearing a white ribbon would be a symbol of men's opposition to violence against women. With only six weeks of preparation, 100,000 men across Canada wore a white ribbon, while many others were drawn into discussion and debate.

### **What does it mean to wear a white ribbon?**

Wearing a white ribbon is a personal *pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls*. Wearing a white ribbon is a way of saying, "Our future has no violence against women."

### **What is the goal of the WRC? How is this accomplished?**

The main goal of WRC is ending violence against women in all its forms. We accomplish this in five ways:

- **Challenging** everyone to speak out, and think about their own beliefs, language and actions.
- **Educating** young people, especially young men and boys, on the issue through the educational resources we produce.
- **Raising public awareness** of the issue.
- **Working in partnership** with women's organizations, the corporate sector, the media and other partners to create a future with no violence against women.
- **Supporting White Ribbon Campaigns** around the world with our experience, resources and networks.

### **When is the focus of the White Ribbon Campaign?**

WRC in Canada runs its campaign from from November 25 (the International Day for the Eradication of Violence Against Women) until December 6, Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Other countries support 16 Days of Action from November 25<sup>th</sup> until December 10<sup>th</sup> but campaigns can occur at any time of the year.

### **What forms of VAW concern you?**

The most widespread problems are physical violence against spouses and girlfriends (from hitting right up to murder) and sexual violence (usually committed by a boyfriend, husband, trusted adult, or family member.) There is also emotional abuse -- sexual harassment at work or on the street, stalking, jokes that demean women, and controlling behavior. In some countries

violence occurs in the form of genital mutilation of girls and trafficking of girls and young women into prostitution.

### **What about other forms of violence?**

Although ending men's violence against women is our focus, we are concerned about all forms of violence. We are deeply concerned about violence against children. We are concerned about violence among boys on the playground, in the sports arena, in relationships, and in war. And we are concerned by acts of violence by women against women or against men, although these are not as extensive nor as frequently lethal as men's violence against women.

Unlike violence by some women against men, violence committed by some men against women has long been socially acceptable and is deeply rooted in beliefs of men's superiority and of men's right to control the lives of "their" women.

### **Does this mean you think that men are bad?**

#### **Are you anti-male?**

We do not think that men are naturally violent and we don't think that men are bad, however we do think all men have roles and responsibilities in ending violence against women. The majority of men are not physically violent. Researchers tell us many past cultures had little or no violence.

At the same time, we do think that some men have learned to express their anger or insecurity through violence. Far too many men have come to believe that violence against a woman, child or another man is an acceptable way to control another person, especially an intimate partner.

By remaining silent about these things, we allow other men to poison our work, schools and homes.

The good news is that more and more men and boys want to make a difference. Caring men are tired of the sexism that hurts the women around them. Caring men are also concerned with the impact of this violence on the lives of men and boys.

### **Do you have opinions on other issues of the day?**

Our goal is for all men and boys to get involved in a campaign devoted to creating a future without violence against women. Within the WRC there is a great diversity of opinion on many important issues, including ones relating to moral, religious and political beliefs. These issues are important, but they shouldn't prevent men from working together to stop domestic violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment. And so we agree to hold diverse opinions. We include men from across the political spectrum from left to right, of all religions, ethnic and racial groups, and backgrounds.

### **Does everyone have to wear a white ribbon?**

Some campaigns use cloth ribbons or small white ribbon pins shaped into our distinctive logo. Others have the white ribbon logo printed on T-shirts or hats. Some use cloth or plastic wristbands. And some only use the logo on posters, pamphlets, or in TV ads.

### **Who starts local and national campaigns?**

The White Ribbon Campaign is unique in that it is a decentralized effort that believes that people know best what will most effectively reach men and boys in their community, school, workplace, and country. In that sense, anyone who believes in the goals and philosophy of the WRC can start a campaign. We encourage White Ribbon supporters in each country or community to work together. In some countries there is an official White Ribbon organization.

### **Are women part of White Ribbon? Do they wear the ribbon?**

In Canada, the WRC is primarily a campaign of men, aimed at boys and young men. But we have women on our board and on our staff. Many local campaigns are encouraged by women's groups, many are led by men and women together, and women participate in many, if not most, activities.

In some countries, campuses, and communities, White Ribbon is led exclusively by men. In others, it is a joint effort or even one where women are leading.

Although the ribbon started as a symbol of men's opposition to violence against women, in many schools and communities both males and females wear the ribbon. For men, it is a personal pledge, for women a show of support that men and boys have a role and responsibility in ending violence against women.

### **What are your relations with women's groups?**

We acknowledge the expertise and central role of women in challenging violence against women. With tremendous heroism, they pioneered this work; they set up support programs for women and pushed for social awareness and legal change. It is essential for our local groups to have an ongoing dialogue with women's groups in their community. Real progress will only be achieved in partnership with women's organizations.

### **Who runs the White Ribbon Campaign?**

In Canada we have a volunteer Board of Directors as well as a small but dedicated staff. Around the world, the WRC is led by many different organizations. The heart and soul of the organization are concerned men and women like you.

### **So what type of organization is it?**

It's an organization like no other. Not only does it include men and women from varying social and political perspectives, but it is an organization that has avoided becoming hierarchical or bureaucratic. We want to keep our emphasis on the community, on the schools and workplaces.

### **How are you funded?**

Although specific projects may be supported by the government, we do not receive any core funding support from any level of government. We rely solely on individual and corporate fundraising, events and project specific government funding.

We recognize that intervention and support services for women who experience violence are under-funded and under-resourced. Because of this, for most of our existence we refused to apply for government funding so as not to further strain these limited resources.

We now have a government funding policy which explicitly prohibits us from applying for support and intervention funding. We only apply for violence prevention funds in partnership with a women's organization, unless specifically invited.

### **Does this take money away from women's groups?**

We support women's programs by encouraging men to give generously to them and by encouraging schools and others to raise money. We believe that by contributing to the reduction of violence against women, we are contributing to the overstretched resources of women's services. And we believe that as more men see this as an important issue, funding will increase to women's organizations. As mentioned above, we will only accept funding for projects when partnered with a women's organization, unless specifically invited.

### **Do you provide grants or general financial support?**

Unfortunately, the WRC is not in the position to provide funding or grants for projects, organizations, or travel, or for establishing national or local White Ribbon Campaigns.

### **How can I help?**

We encourage you to support White Ribbon activities in your community, and we encourage you to help the WRC in Canada and around the world with your generous financial support.

#### **THE WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN**

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#### **Visit our blog at:**

<http://ourfuturehasnoviolenceagainstwomen.blogspot.com/>

#### **Join the White Ribbon Campaign Facebook page:**

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