



# REPRODUCTIVE COERCION **quick facts** for awareness-raising

## WHAT IS REPRODUCTIVE COERCION?

Reproductive coercion is the behavior used to pressure or coerce a woman into becoming pregnant or into continuing or ending a pregnancy against her will, through the use of manipulation, intimidation, threats, and/or actual acts of violence.<sup>1</sup>

Reproductive coercion most-often manifests within the context of an intimate, heterosexual relationship, when a man uses pregnancy-controlling behaviors in an effort to maintain power, control, and domination over a woman.<sup>2</sup>

Women victimized by reproductive coercion may not recognize that these behaviors are abusive, particularly if there is no history of physical or sexual violence in their relationship.<sup>3</sup>

**Example:** A man may try to get his girlfriend pregnant against her will in order to keep her physically and financially tied to him forever.

## WHAT DOES REPRODUCTIVE COERCION LOOK LIKE?

**Pregnancy pressure:** When an individual pressures or coerces a woman into becoming pregnant against her will.

### Examples include:

- Threatening to hurt a woman physically, economically, or emotionally if she refuses to become pregnant;
- Making a woman feel guilty for not wanting to become pregnant;
- Accusing a woman of infidelity if she does not want to become pregnant.

**Birth control sabotage:** When an individual interferes with a woman's use of contraception to cause her to become pregnant against her will.

### Examples include:

- Physically or economically preventing a woman from obtaining birth control;
- Hiding, throwing away, or destroying a woman's birth control pills;
- Pulling off contraceptive patches or pulling out vaginal rings;
- Refusing to use condoms, removing condoms, or poking holes in condoms;
- Refusing to pull out during sex when previously agreed upon.

**Pregnancy outcome control:** When an individual pressures or coerces a woman into continuing or ending a pregnancy against her will.

### Examples include:

- Making a woman feel guilty for wanting to continue a pregnancy or have an abortion;
- Convincing a woman that she has no other option but to continue a pregnancy or have an abortion;
- Hurting a woman (or threatening to hurt a woman) physically and/or emotionally if she continues a pregnancy or has an abortion;
- Physically or economically preventing a woman from obtaining an abortion;
- Physically assaulting a woman in an attempt to induce a miscarriage.

## REPRODUCTIVE COERCION AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV)

Women victimized by their intimate partners are more likely to experience reproductive coercion than non-abused women.

- Roughly **25%** of women who report being physically or sexually abused by their intimate partners also report being pressured or forced to become pregnant.<sup>4,5</sup>

Women victimized by their intimate partners have an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancy as a result of pregnancy pressure and birth-control sabotage.

- A woman having an unintended pregnancy is **4x** more likely to be in an abusive relationship than a woman having a planned pregnancy.<sup>6</sup>
- Women who are being physically abused by their intimate partners are **3x** more likely to have an STI than non-abused women.<sup>7</sup>

**For more information on IPV and reproductive health, please visit:**  
[www.ncadv.org/programs/reproductive-coercion/Fact-sheet.pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/programs/reproductive-coercion/Fact-sheet.pdf)

**Educating friends and family about reproductive coercion can help them recognize abusive behaviors in their own relationships and encourage them to take steps to protect themselves and their reproductive autonomy.**

See citations in Appendix A on page 31 of *Exposing Reproductive Coercion: A Toolkit for Awareness-Raising, Assessment, and Intervention*, located at [www.feministcenter.org/RCtoolkit.pdf](http://www.feministcenter.org/RCtoolkit.pdf)

