



IN BRIEF: NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



**The National Action Plan was developed through the
Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Forum of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women,
and their respective government partners and agencies**

Everyone has the right to live free from violence. However, many people in Canada continue to experience violence every day because of their sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, or perceived gender. This is gender-based violence (GBV), one of the most pervasive, deadly, and deeply rooted human rights violations.

30% of women report having experienced a sexual assault since the age of 15.¹ 44% of women report having experienced some form of intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime.² Not only does GBV impact individuals, families, and communities, but it also places a costly burden on the health, social, and justice systems. In 2009, it was estimated that IPV had an economic cost of \$7.4 billion annually and sexual violence a cost of \$4.8 billion annually.^{3,4}

Preventing and addressing GBV in Canada requires a coordinated national approach, with federal, provincial,ⁱ and territorial governments working in close partnership with survivors, Indigenous partners, direct service providers, experts, advocates, municipalities, the private sector, and researchers.

In January 2021, the Joint Declaration for a Canada Free of Gender-Based Violence was endorsed by the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers

responsible for the status of women. It laid out the High-Level Framework for Joint Action, identifying the vision, goals, pillars, and foundation for the National Action Plan.

The National Action Plan was developed through the Federal–Provincial–Territorial Forum of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women and their respective government partners and agencies. It builds on existing federal, provincial, and territorial approaches and strategies to prevent and address GBV. It is a strategic framework for action within and across jurisdictions to support victims, survivors, and their families, no matter where they live.

Federal, provincial, and territorial collaboration is key to the development and implementation of a national response. All jurisdictions have different roles to play but share responsibility in changing the attitudes and behaviours that sustain GBV and in implementing the National Action Plan to End GBV.

i. Gender-based violence is a priority for the Government of Quebec, which has invested significant funds to end violence against women. However, although it supports the overall objectives of the pan-Canadian action plan to end gender-based violence, the Government of Quebec cannot adhere to it because it intends to retain full responsibility in this area within its territory. Through an agreement that respects its autonomy, the Government of Quebec expects to receive its fair share of federal funding to support the programs, initiatives, and services to end gender-based violence that it puts in place based on the needs of its territory.

High-Level Framework for Joint Action

Vision

A Canada free of gender-based violence. A Canada that supports victims, survivors, and their families, no matter where they live.

Guiding Principles

- Be flexible in response to regional and sectoral realities
- Respect jurisdictional authority of each order of government
- Promote interjurisdictional collaboration
- Support Indigenous-led solutions
- Be grounded in an intersectional approach
- Promote a multi-sectoral, cross-departmental/ministry approach
- Support community-based, community-centred approaches
- Promote evidence-based, innovative, and responsive policy and programs
- Incorporate a systems view of services and programs
- Be survivor-centric and inclusive of children and families
- Recognize the expertise of survivors and community agencies providing support
- Be trauma- and violence-informed
- Be culturally safe, relevant, accessible, and appropriate

- Recognize that community organizations provide gender-based violence support and services that are critical to advancing gender equality
- Recognize the role of men and boys in preventing and addressing gender-based violence

Goals

- Engage all people in Canada in changing the social norms, attitudes, and behaviours that contribute to gender-based violence
- Address the social and economic determinants that contribute to and perpetuate gender-based violence
- Ensure anyone facing gender-based violence has reliable and timely access to culturally appropriate and accessible protection and services
- Improve the health, social, economic, and justice outcomes of those impacted by gender-based violence



Overview of Pillars and Opportunities for Action

Pillar One – Support for Victims, Survivors and Their Families

GBV services provide critical, life-saving support and safe spaces, and they deliver social, health, and community services that protect and empower victims and survivors, including women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people experiencing violence. The safety and wellbeing of victims survivors are at the centre of the National Action Plan to End GBV in recognition that they are the experts in their own personal experiences, with diverse backgrounds and needs.

Examples of Opportunities for Action

- Increase sustainable operational/core funding for GBV services.
- Improve programs, services, and support that impact people experiencing GBV so these initiatives may better address the intersectional needs of diverse communities and populations.
- Enhance the capacity of health, justice, and social services and systems to provide evidence-informed, integrated GBV services and support to meet the needs of GBV victims/survivors and their families
- Improve the responsiveness of child, youth, and family services.

Pillar Two – Prevention

The National Action Plan to End GBV emphasizes primary prevention approaches that address the root causes of GBV to stop violence before it occurs. Prevention cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach. These efforts must be gender-informed/sensitive and inclusive, intersectional, trauma- and violence-informed, and culturally appropriate in order to best meet the needs of diverse populations.

Examples of Opportunities for Action

- Promote population-specific and evidence-informed public awareness campaigns to prevent GBV.
- Develop age-appropriate school- and community-based approaches to educate children and young people in order to prevent GBV.

- Equip professionals with training and guidance on trauma- and violence-informed approaches for preventing and addressing GBV in the communities they serve and in their workplaces.
- Engage men and boys to challenge and change norms, attitudes, and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequality; to become positive role models; and to understand and take action against GBV.
- Support programming created and led by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people to prevent violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. This includes programs rooted in the land and in the local cultures and communities of diverse Indigenous identities, such as urban Indigenous people.

Pillar Three – Responsive Justice System

GBV is a violation of human rights and, in many cases⁵, a violation of Canadian criminal law. Over the years, changes have been made to improve the experiences of victims and survivors. These include the enactment of the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights* and various amendments to *Criminal Code* provisions related to testimonial aids and victim impact statements, as well as changes to clarify the law surrounding sexual assault. Efforts have also been made to increase awareness and training about the needs of victims and survivors of all crimes, including GBV. However, there is still room for improvement.

Examples of Opportunities for Action

- Increase accessibility and improve confidence in the Canadian justice system.
- Facilitate change within the justice system to address GBV.
- Enhance the justice system’s support and measures to prevent revictimization and recurring trauma.



Pillar Four – Implementing Indigenous-Led Approaches

Federal, provincial, and territorial governments and communities in Canada should continue their commitment to fostering and maintaining relationships based on respect, partnership, and recognition of rights with Indigenous-led organizations, including gender-based violence organizations, and with Indigenous peoples. Working with survivors and their families, Indigenous governments and partners, non-governmental organizations, provinces, and territories as well as working horizontally across federal institutions will help ensure a coordinated approach that supports sustainable progress towards ending gender-based violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, no matter where they live.

Examples of Opportunities for Transformational Change

- Ensure that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, no matter where they live, are heard, supported, promoted, and empowered when government policies and regulations, programs, support, and services are developed to address social, economic, cultural, and other forms of marginalization. This must be done in a manner inclusive of urban, rural, remote, and northern communities through the Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People and the 13 provincial and territorial proposed actions/strategies/plans in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan. Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, communities, and organizations have the expertise and knowledge on how to take action on GBV. Federal, provincial, and territorial governments must include them in the development, implementation, and evaluation of government actions.
- Provide adequate, accessible, equitable, and sustainable funding directly to Indigenous-led organizations, including grassroots organizations, for existing and new Indigenous-led gender-based violence initiatives, programs, and services focused on prevention and early intervention.
- Expand, provide, and strengthen capacity-building opportunities for existing and new strength-based, Indigenous-led GBV initiatives, programs, services, and organizations that work to

provide safe spaces and to address, educate, prevent, and end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

- Invest in and partner with Indigenous-led organizations and communities to develop public education, create awareness, and

increase public and government accountability to address systemic racism and discrimination experienced by Indigenous peoples, highlighting the significant contributions of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Pillar Five – Social Infrastructure and Enabling Environment

While GBV occurs across all socio-economic groups, populations that already experience socioeconomic inequities (e.g., poverty, homelessness, or inequitable access to healthcare and social services) are at a greater risk of experiencing GBV. Challenging the normalization of GBV and addressing systemic inequities are both important steps to addressing its root causes.

Examples of Opportunities for Action

- Create opportunities for equal and full participation in the economy.
- Strengthen gender equity in unpaid labour.
- Strengthen and improve access to affordable early learning and childcare.
- Identify opportunities to address poverty, homelessness, and housing.
- Enhance health systems and service responses to GBV.
- Improve access to reliable and affordable broadband and technological tools, particularly in rural, remote, and northern communities.



Foundation

Implementing the National Action Plan to End GBV requires a strong foundation based on the following three components:

- Leadership, coordination and engagement
- Data, research and knowledge mobilization
- Reporting and monitoring

Examples of Opportunities for Action

- Enhance and strengthen leadership, coordination, engagement, research, and knowledge mobilization.
- Monitor and report on the progress of the National Action Plan to End GBV.
- Develop research capacity to address gaps in the evidence and analyses; and enhance data collection and governance to support intersectional populations-based analyses.
- Invest in the design, development and implementation of holistic performance measurement frameworks that are by, for, and accountable to Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, no matter where they live.

The National Action Plan to End GBV is designed to adapt to evolving needs and emerging issues. As a next step, federal, provincial, and territorial governments will further discuss its implementation and develop more detailed targets and indicators.

References

1. Cotter, A., and Savage, L. "[Gender-based violence and unwanted sexual behaviour in Canada, 2018: Initial findings from the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces.](#)" Statistics Canada, 2019.
2. Cotter, A. 2021. "[Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018: An overview.](#)" Juristat. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X.
3. Department of Justice Canada. "[An Estimation of the Economic Impact of Violence Victimization in Canada, 2009.](#)" Department of Justice Canada, 2012.
4. Ibid.
5. Many forms of GBV are crimes. However, some incidents of GBV, while undeniably harmful, do not meet the legal threshold for a criminal offence as outlined in the Criminal Code of Canada. For example, some instances of verbal abuse, insults, and some controlling behaviours, may be abusive but not criminal in and of themselves.