

October 8th, 2024

Premier of Ontario  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier Ford,

RE: Calls to Action - Bill 173, Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, 2024

WomanACT was pleased and encouraged by the universal support for Bill 173, Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic Act, within the Ontario Legislature. Bill 173 aligns the province with 95 other municipalities in Ontario that have officially declared IPV an epidemic, identifying a shared sense of urgency in addressing Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

Presently, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy is tasked with conducting a comprehensive study on the issue and impact of intimate partner violence (IPV) in Ontario. We know the importance of making evidence-based decisions and encouraging research that supports building capacity and knowledge on the issue of IPV is critical. We call on the government to not delay passing Bill-173 due to research and that the existing comprehensive research and reports that share the voices and experiences of survivors and staff supporting them be acknowledged and used.

Bill 173 represents a unified stance from experts from across the province and beyond, frontline service providers working in the anti-violence/violence against women sectors (VAW), community organizations, and, most notably, survivors of IPV themselves. Bill 173 cannot be a symbolic legislative move, it should validate the combined research and advocacy efforts from the VAW sector to end gender-based violence (GBV) to ensure holistic support for victims of IPV.

We want to acknowledge that the Ontario Government's commitments to end GBV exhibited through its Ontario-Stands action plan to end GBV and bilateral agreement under the National Action Plan to end Gender-Based Violence, are commendable. Failure to formally recognize and declare IPV as an epidemic severely undercuts any commitment to social change. Prompt action on Bill-173 shows Ontarians that the Legislature is resolute about ending IPV and GBV.

We call upon the Government of Ontario to maintain this momentum and urge MPPs to act now by reviewing the compilation of research attached to this letter and begin implementing the surmounting existing evidence-based recommendations experts, community partners, and survivors offer. This sends a clear message to Ontarians, including the loved ones of victims of IPV, that their government committed to upholding their inherent rights and safety.

We applaud your shared commitment to this vision for our province and our community, and we welcome an opportunity to discuss the research package provided and its corresponding recommendations with you and your team further.

Sincerely,



Harmy Mendoza  
Executive Director  
WomanACT

# THE CURRENT STATE OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN ONTARIO

RESEARCH & RESOURCES



WomanACT

## Acknowledgement

The development of the "Bill 173 - The Current State of Intimate Partner Violence in Ontario" resource package has been a collaborative effort with our members and community partners. Their contributions have been instrumental in gathering a comprehensive collection of research and evidence-based recommendations from experts, community organizations, and academics on the current state of intimate partner violence (IPV). This collaboration reflects our collective specialized knowledge in this field.

Through extensive engagement, we have ensured that the resources included in this package comprehensively acknowledge existing efforts and evidence-based research. These resources address the genuine needs and evolving realities of women and gender-diverse people facing violence in Ontario.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous contributions of our members and our partners in the violence against women sector. Representing a wide range of sectors, populations, and areas of expertise, their support has been crucial in validating the combined research and advocacy efforts behind this bill.

## Endorsements

Humberto Carolo, Chief Executive Officer, White Ribbon  
Sami Pritchard, Manager of Advocacy, YWCA Toronto  
Deepa Mattoo, Executive Director, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic  
Carla Neto, Executive Director, Women's Habitat of Etobicoke  
Marissa Kokkoros, Executive Director, Aura Freedom International  
Iris Fabbro, Executive Director, North York Women's Centre  
Kripa Sekhar, Executive Director, South Asian Women's Centre  
Kelly Potvin, Executive Director, Elizabeth Fry Toronto  
Jackie Eunjoo Kim, Executive Director, KCWA Family and Social Services  
Nkeiruka Osagie, Women's Community Development Coordinator, ACT  
Marva Martin, Mental Health Counsellor, Delta Family Resource Centre  
Laverne Blake, Director of Operations and Programs, Ernestine's Womens Shelter  
Joyce Ann Johnston, VAW Shelter Manager, The Women's Centre Grey Bruce  
Canadian Anti-Stalking Association (CASA)  
Jennifer Cameron Clinical Nurse Educator Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Program  
North Bay Regional Hospital  
Jennifer Fraser, PhD, Educator  
Jennifer Vansteenkiste, Executive Director, Women's Interval Home of Sarnia and Lambton  
Tim McClemont, Executive Director, Positive Health Network  
Ellie Neary RN, Team Lead, Forensic Nurse, Brightshores Health Systems  
Dani Bartlett Executive Director, Gender Equality Coalition of Ontario (GECO)  
Jenniffer Olenewa, Community Projects Lead, Optimism Place Women's Shelter  
Erin Griver, Director of Inasmuch House & Women's Services, Mission Services of Hamilton  
Tracy Rogers, Sarnia Lambton Coordinating Committee on Violence Against Women  
Rebecca Robinson, Violence Against Women Program Coordinator, Sudbury and Area Victim Services  
Leigh Martins, Training, Education, Volunteer Coordinator, Kingston Interval House  
Amy Deschamps, Director, Housing and Gender-Based Violence Support Services, YWCA Hamilton  
Sarah Earl, Clinical Director, Resolve Counselling Services Canada

Sarah Lappan, PAR Facilitator & Administrator, Resolve Counselling Services Canada,  
Joseph McCauley, Resolve Counselling Services Canada  
Resolve Counselling Services Canada  
Chelsea Raso, Corporate Administrator, Resolve Counselling Services  
Kevin Raison, PAR Coordinator, Resolve Counselling Services  
Erin Leigh, Executive Director, CFS Ottawa  
Daniella Northrup, Executive Director, Amelia Rising SVSC  
Kaleb Verk, Clinical Team Lead, Resolve Counselling Services Canada  
Dawn Sutherland, Executive Director, Anduhyaun Inc  
Patricia Mensah  
Christina Bourikos, Lawyer  
Marta C Hajek, CEO, Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO)  
Sophia Cousins-Williams, Director of Justice and Court Programs, John Howard Society of  
Toronto  
Samantha Carter, Resolutions Committee Chair BPW London  
Caitlin Norwich-Stevenson, Women's Counsellor, Resolve Counselling Services  
Margaret Nwosu, Co Ordinator, Violence Prevention Team, Rexdale Women 's Centre,  
Etobicoke  
Drupati Maharaj, Community Member  
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre  
Lynda Kosowan, Executive Director, Scarborough Women's Centre  
Thea Symonds - Coordinator, Woman Abuse Working Group  
Cory Lyn Baker - EAP and Consulting Coordinator - Resolve Counselling Services Canada  
Joud Bayeh, Senior Policy Analyst, Ontario Ministry of Education  
Norma Trivino, Counsellor. Counselling Services for Women and Girls  
Israel Trivino, Israel Garage Doors  
Roz Gunn, Director of Communications and Advocacy, YWCA Cambridge  
YWCA Hamilton  
Debbie Douglas, Executive Director, OCASI- Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants  
Nicole Taylor, Program Director, Women's Centre for Social Justice  
Kregg Fordyce, KFA Architects and Planners  
Andria Gillis, Founder, People Lab  
Sheila Macdonald, Director, Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment  
Centres  
Warda Warsame, National Network Coordinator, End FGM Canada Network  
Sandra Russell, Educator  
Orisha Burns, Social Media Manager, Dr. Roz's Healing Place  
Holly Smith, Social Worker  
Esther Gieringer - HER Grey Bruce  
Jaspreet Gill, Executive Director, York Region Centre for Community Safety  
Erin Lee, Executive Director, Lanark County Interval House & Community Support  
Emily Murray, Legal Director, Luke's Place  
Barb Issett, Principal, IQ Business Events  
Eight community members and survivors of IPV

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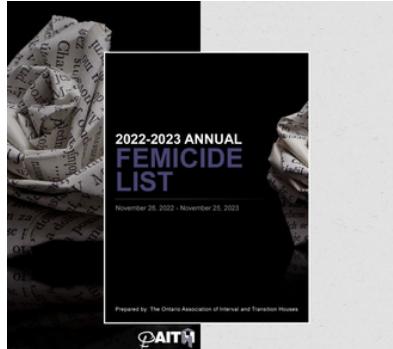
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### IPV & RURAL & REMOTE COMMUNITIES

Research and reports that highlight the unique challenges and needs of IPV survivors in rural and remote communities, such as geographical isolation and lack of service capacity.

# Intimate Partner Violence & Gender-Based Violence as an Epidemic in Ontario

The research below speaks to the prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) across Ontario and its effects on Ontarian communities and individuals. According to the [Canadian Women's Foundation](#), GBV is an umbrella term for violence targeted at an individual or group based on their gender identity or gender expression. IPV is one form of gender-based violence commonly experienced by women, girls, and gender-diverse people; addressing IPV is at the forefront of responding and reducing gender-based violence (GBV).



## 2022-2023 Annual Femicide List

*The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition House*

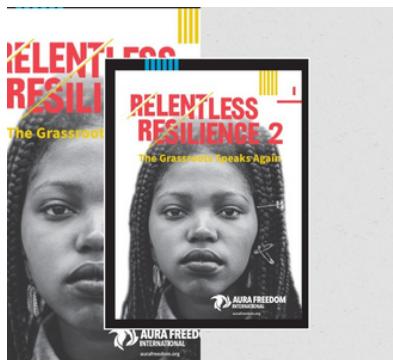
Since 1990, there have been over 1,020 victims of femicide in Ontario. This annual list consolidates media reports examining the contexts of femicide cases to bring awareness to them, and influence advocacy and policy with the goal of preventing femicide in Ontario.



## Relentless Resilience #1: Addressing Gender-Based Violence through Grassroots Excellence

*Aura Freedom International*

The report calls for holistic changes to address the root causes of GBV and tackling societal power imbalances preserving the status quo. Grassroots organizations, frontline workers, and survivors were consulted to evaluate the confounding impact of GBV on achieving the UN Sustainability Goals. This report is a point of reference for advocacy with its framework informed by human rights activism, grassroots excellence, and trauma informed practice and highlights survivor resilience.



## Relentless Resilience 2: The Grassroots Speak Again

*Aura Freedom International*

Report emphasizes the pressing need for a National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. Community consultations affirmed the need for grassroots agency to be acknowledged and respected, have Canada be free from GBV, and present recommendations that empower communities to enact meaningful change. These recommendations have been echoed and demand action now.



## National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence: What We Heard

*WomanACT*

Community consultations in anticipation of Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence revealed chronic lack of wrap around care for survivors exacerbated by COVID-19. Distrust in the judicial system due to fear of discrimination, especially for racialized survivors, coupled with unfamiliarity with the justice system confounded access to services. Affordable housing options and employer knowledge on GBV is severely lacking.



## An Urgent Call to Action: Recognition of the Intimate Partner Violence Epidemic in Toronto, Canada

*Aura Freedom International & Women's Habitat*

The brief highlights the growing prevalence of gender-based violence, particularly by known individuals like partners, reflecting systemic issues. It emphasizes the role of misogyny, patriarchy, and colonialism in such violence. Urging action from Toronto to address these issues and create lasting change by declaring IPV as an epidemic.



## **More than a Number: 52 Femicides in 52 Weeks in One Province**

Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses

This report analyzes data collected from 2021-2022 femicide list and media analysis to examine femicide trends in Ontario, and risk factors associated with femicide. The analysis breaks down factors associated with victims, perpetrators, their relationship, and the geographical spread of femicide across Ontario. The insights provide valuable information about emerging and continuing femicide trends in Ontario.



## **Policies Matter: Addressing Violence Against Women Through Reflection, Knowledge, and Action**

WomanACT, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic, Elizabeth Fry Toronto

Report presents key activities and outcomes of the Policies Matter Project. It summarizes the groundwork laid by earlier reports and refocuses on the policy intersections that put women who experience violence at increased risk, while also proposing a framework for assessing the determinants of women's safety. It catalogues services, interventions and innovations being undertaken by various service providers to address the front-line realities experienced by women, and to advance women's safety and equality.



## **Policy Scan: Canadian Policies & Initiatives on Gender-Based Violence (Newcomer Perspective)**

Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services

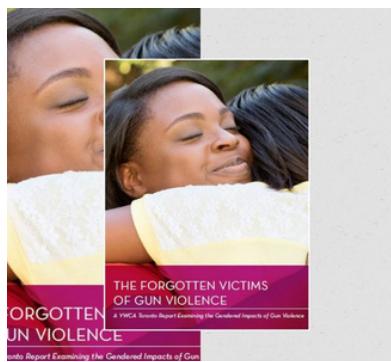
There is a gap in newcomer perspectives in efforts to combat GBV in Canada despite their disproportionate access to support services and resources heightening their risk of violence. Canada's National Action Plan contains fragmented inclusions of newcomer considerations.



## Gender-based violence & the Sustainable Development Goals

*Aura Freedom International*

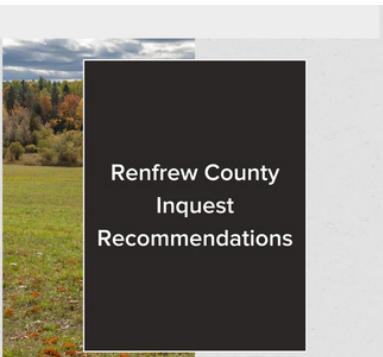
The report conducts a thorough exploration of the intersectionality of gender-based violence and its impediment on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across Canada. 1 woman or girl is killed every 3 days in Canada, 87% of the accused in femicide cases are male. Eradicating GBV and IPV are directly correlated with achieving numerous SDGs, creating a stronger and more equitable Canadian society that is more resilient and productive.



## The Forgotten Victims of Gun Violence

*YWCA Toronto*

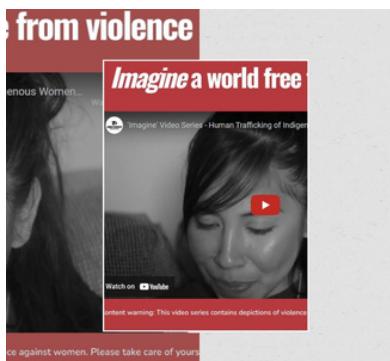
This report uses an intersectional gender perspective to investigate gun violence in the communities served by YWCA Toronto. By analyzing academic research and conducting interviews with YWCA Toronto personnel in different city areas, the report identifies particular organizational deficiencies and provides recommendations to assist Black girls, women, and their children including the need for trauma-informed training & education, grief counselling, funding into support services, and banning handguns and assault rifles.



## Renfrew County Inquest - 86 Recommendations

*Office of the Chief Coroner*

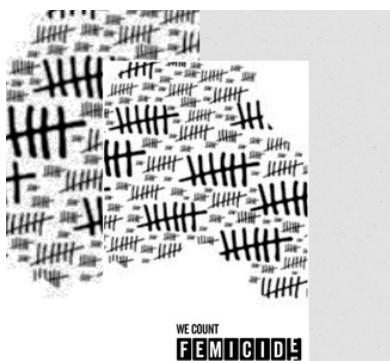
In response to the inquest into the deaths of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kuzyk and Nathalie Warmerdam the jury presented 86 recommendations covering areas such as oversight, accountability, systemic approaches, collaboration, communication, funding, education, training, measures against perpetrators of intimate partner violence, intervention, and safety. The number one recommendation was to formally declare intimate partner violence as an epidemic.



## Video Series: Imagine a world free from Violence against women.

*Aura Freedom International*

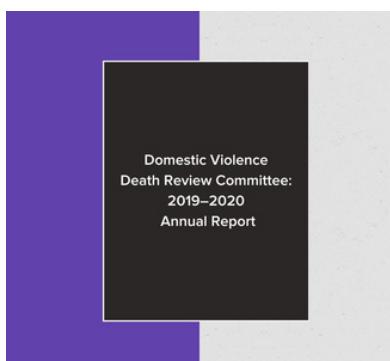
Aura Freedom's Imagine video series explores the impact of male violence against women on survivors, families, and society. It affects housing, healthcare, education, and the economy, impacting communities and countries. Ending violence against women promotes community and national well-being.



## Monthly Femicide Snapshots.

*Ontario Association of Interval and Transition House, Building a Bigger Wave*

These monthly snapshots capture data on confirmed and unconfirmed femicides throughout Ontario available in French and English. The reports conglomerate media reports from national, local, and television sources that cover the cases. The results reinforce the fact that femicides are preventable and demand immediate meaningful intervention through policy, and accountability mechanisms embedded within the criminal justice system.



## Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee: 2019-2020 Annual Report

*Domestic Violence Death Review Committee*

The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee assists the Office of the Chief Coroner to review deaths related to domestic violence. This multi-disciplinary review culminates in a final report reporting on systemic issues, problems, gaps, and risk factors evidenced from the cases to offer suggestions for more effective interventions and prevention strategies.



## **Men's Engagement in Gender-Based Violence Prevention: A Critical Review of Evaluation Approaches**

*White Ribbon*

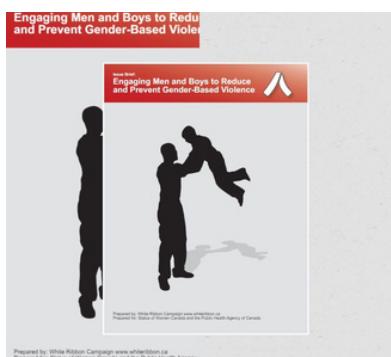
This literature was undertaken to explore gender-based violence prevention programs and to identify evaluation approaches to GBV prevention programming. The literature review also identified challenges to evaluating GBV prevention programs that engage men and boys, and presents a broader definition of "engagement" when it comes to building men and boys' capacity to be anti-violence against women allies.



## **Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls through Male Engagement: Exploring a National Evaluation Framework**

*White Ribbon*

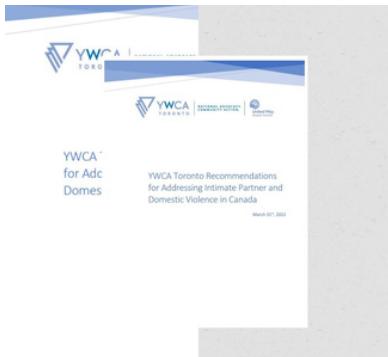
As part of a larger project to building a National Community of Practice for engaging men and boys in gender-based violence prevention in Canada, White Ribbon led a process to develop a national evaluation framework. The framework is a tool for other organizations in the gender-based violence prevention sector to guide the development and evaluation of approaches to engaging men and boys.



## **Engaging Men and Boys to Reduce and Prevent Gender-Based Violence**

*White Ribbon*

This issue brief looks at the history of engaging men and boys in gender-based violence prevention efforts in Canada, as well as the root causes of men's violence against women, to underscore the need for engaging men and boys, and how to do so effectively and meaningfully. The brief offers promising practices and strategies for engaging men and boys.



## **YWCA Toronto Recommendations for Addressing Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada**

YWCA Toronto

This report addressed to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women outlines recommendations to mitigate GBV across Canada. The report highlights targeted strategies in the areas of education and prevention, financial support, safe and affordable housing, mental health supports, justice system, women and gender-diverse people with precarious status , and ensuring a stable VAW and GBV sector.

# HOUSING

The research below demonstrates the profound impact IPV has on survivors' housing stability, putting women, girls and gender-diverse people at an increased risk of homelessness. The reports demonstrate the crucial role housing programs and services play for supporting women and children experiencing violence, and the need to diversify housing options for survivors.



## **Successful Tenancies: Exploring Survivors' Experiences in the Private Rental Market in Toronto**

WomanACT

Gender-based violence often leads to homelessness for women and gender-diverse individuals in Toronto, creating challenges in finding stable housing. This report examines the support required for survivors to thrive as tenants. Community-based research with survivors reveals issues such as hidden homelessness, discrimination, and financial insecurity in private rental housing in Toronto.



## **'A Place of My Own': Survivors perspectives on the Safe at Home housing model**

WomanACT

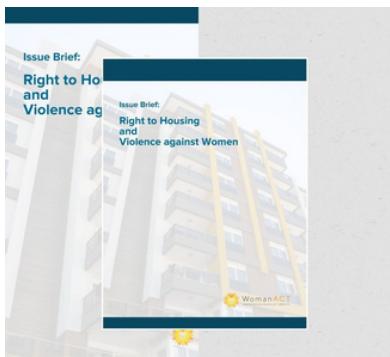
Housing options for women facing intimate partner violence often require them to leave their homes, leading to housing instability and disruptions. Qualitative research explores survivors' housing choices and preferences, as well as policies and programs supporting them in staying in their homes or finding independent housing after leaving an abusive relationship.



## Safe at Home (Literature Review)

WomanACT

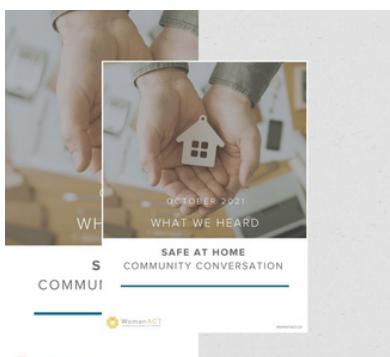
Most housing options for women fleeing violence require them to leave home to ensure safety. However, policies and programs that prioritize women's independence can help them stay safely in their own homes, shifting the focus to holding perpetrators accountable. This literature review synthesizes evidence on supporting women to remain safely in their homes when leaving a violent relationship. It examines policy and program approaches from various jurisdictions, evaluates intervention outcomes and challenges, and identifies promising practices to broaden housing solutions for women facing violence.



## Right to housing and violence against women

WomanACT

Violations of the right to housing are often gendered, with women and gender-diverse people more likely to face inadequate housing and homelessness. The right to housing includes the right to safe and adequate housing, so women in violent homes are directly experiencing a violation of this right. This issue brief explores the links between the right to housing and violence against women, examining the connections between homelessness and violence and the key barriers survivors face in obtaining safe, adequate, and permanent housing.



## Safe at Home Community Conversation: What We Heard

WomanACT

Safe at Home programs help women remain in their homes or independent housing when leaving a violent relationship. WomanACT researches these programs to broaden housing options for women fleeing violence, bringing stakeholders together to identify strategies to support this goal. This report details stakeholder insights on advancing Safe at Home models in Canada, including current policies and implementation considerations.

## Housing, Homelessness, and Violence Against Women

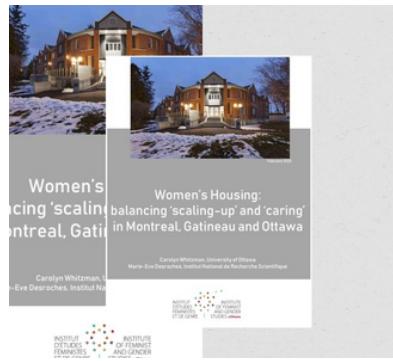
*Women's Shelters Canada*



Women's Shelters Canada advocates nationally on violence against women issues. Despite the link between violence, housing, and homelessness, the VAW shelter sector has had limited involvement with housing and homelessness sectors. This discussion paper reviews housing options for domestic violence survivors and aims to integrate an intersectional gender-based analysis into the National Housing Strategy to improve housing outcomes for these women.

## Women's Housing: balancing 'scaling-up' and 'caring' in Montreal, Gatineau and Ottawa

*Institute of Feminist and Gender Studies (University of Ottawa)*



This report examines how women's non-profit housing providers can expand affordable housing while maintaining their care-focused approach. It highlights the unique housing challenges faced by diverse groups of women and analyzes affordability issues in Montreal, Ottawa, and Gatineau. Key recommendations include investing in capacity building for women's housing organizations, providing gender-disaggregated data, incorporating intersectionality, listening to women with lived experiences, and integrating social housing with health services.

## Breaking the Cycle of Abuse and Closing the Housing Gap

*Women's Shelters Canada*



Women's Shelters Canada represents the VAW sector at a national level coordinating 14 provincial and territorial shelter organizations. Second stage shelters provide transitional supportive housing for survivors of intimate partner violence, offering extended time and support to heal and rebuild their lives. A pan-Canadian study by Women's Shelters Canada, funded by the CMHC, highlights the crucial role of these shelters, addressing research gaps and exploring how they help break the cycle of abuse and close the housing gap for survivors.



## **The State of Women's Housing Need & Homelessness in Canada**

Women's National Housing Network, Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, Keepers of the Circle

Homelessness amongst women, girls and gender diverse peoples is a crisis in Canada. This comprehensive literature review explores evidence on the unique causes, consequences, and experiences of homelessness and housing precarity for this group in Canada. According to the report, the research clearly demonstrates IPV and family violence as a common pathway into homelessness.



## **This is Not Home**

### *Sistering*

The "This is Not Home" project focuses on gender-specific, low-barrier drop-in programs for marginalized women and gender-diverse individuals experiencing homelessness in Canada. It aims to study service models and experiences of program participants through a community-based research approach involving various stakeholders like program managers, staff, and member-researchers.



## **The Pan-Canadian Women's Housing & Homelessness Survey**

*Women's National Housing Network*

The survey provides insights into homelessness among women and gender diverse individuals in Canada. Challenges include undercounting, housing affordability issues, safety concerns, poverty linked to low incomes, and barriers to accessing government benefits. Participants resort to income-generating strategies, face eviction without legal support, and experience trauma and discrimination. Many struggle to access emergency services and face housing instability due to personal relationships. Early experiences of homelessness lead to chronic housing issues, with high exposure to trauma and violence. Discrimination from landlords and property managers exacerbates housing insecurity, especially for those with disabilities.



## Domestic Violence in Sponsor Relationships among Immigrant and Refugee Women and its Links to Homelessness

Canadian Council on Social Development, Vancouver and Lower Mainland Multicultural Family Support Services Society, Immigrant Women Services of Ottawa

This study focuses on immigrant and refugee women at risk of homelessness due to factors like domestic violence. It aims to understand the link between homelessness and critical issues such as domestic violence, unemployment, and poverty within this population. The study examines the dynamics of sponsor relationships and seeks to empower and support immigrant women to reduce the risk of domestic violence and homelessness.



## Pathways and trajectories linking housing instability and poor health among low-income women experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV): Toward a conceptual framework.

Centre for Research on Inner City Health, Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute (St. Michael's Hospital Research)

Grounded theory was used to study pathways to housing instability and poor health in low-income women with intimate partner violence experiences in Ontario, Canada. The study highlighted direct and indirect pathways linking IPV, housing instability, and poor health through material, psychological, and social trajectories. Achieving stable housing was crucial for stabilizing the women's health amidst complex challenges.

## Conceptualizing Housing Instability: Experiences with Material and Psychological Instability Among Women Living with Partner Violence.

Centre for Research on Inner City Health, Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute (St. Michael's Hospital Research)

Limited evidence exists on psychological housing instability for women at risk of homelessness due to IPV. Women facing housing instability also deal with social, familial, financial, mental health, and violence-related issues. Accessing services to address these challenges is difficult without coordinated models. Housing instability should include psychological aspects and be considered along with other social and health problems exacerbating housing precarity for abused women.



# LEGAL SYSTEM

The research below highlights the impacts of legal system responses on survivors of GBV and various areas of their lives, including child custody, access to housing, and economic independence, all of which are essential for survivors seeking safety. The research demonstrates the crucial need for collaborative legal system change to address systemic gaps and barriers that jeopardize survivors' safety or lead to criminalization.



## Reducing Stigma: Exploring the Intersections Between Trauma, Race, and Criminization

*WomanACT, Elizabeth Fry Toronto*

Women and gender-diverse individuals in the criminal justice system experience high rates of violence and trauma, which can lead to actions that are criminalized. Trauma is often worsened by experiences in the justice system. This research explores the relationship between trauma and criminalization among racialized women and highlights the dangerous stigma they face as a result.



## The de-gendering of male perpetrated intimate partner violence against female partners in Ontario family law courts

*University of Quelpth, Luke's Place*

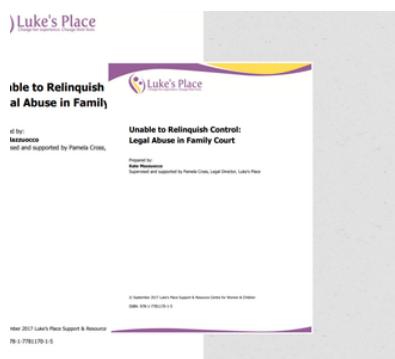
This paper reviews 46 Ontario family law cases from 2019 involving IPV, finding that judges often de-gendered the language of violence and that male judges were more likely to negatively assess mothers. There is a need for further research on the impact of recent changes to the Canadian Divorce Act on judicial recognition of family violence and impact on family court outcomes.



## What you don't know can hurt you: The importance of family violence screening tools for family law practitioners

Luke's Place

This report advocates for the adoption of universal family violence (FV) screening tools for family law practitioners in Canada, highlighting their critical role in identifying abuse early in the lawyer-client relationship, improving safety for survivors, and informing appropriate legal strategies and referrals. It outlines the necessity of specialized training for lawyers, best practices for implementing these tools, and recommendations for further research to ensure effective adaptation across diverse client populations.



## Unable to Relinquish Control: Legal abuse in family court

Luke's Place

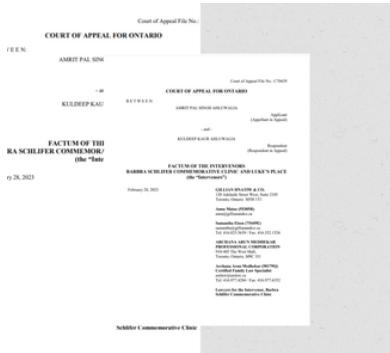
This research paper outlines different tactics of legal abuse in the family court system as a way to exert control post-separation. It highlights the serious ramifications for survivors which includes financial burden of legal costs, missed work, psychological and physical health stress, and concerns for children's safety. The family court system and family law practitioners implement procedural, policy, and practice strategies to deter legal abuse.



## Criminalization of women forum

Barbra Schlifer Clinic, United Way of Greater Toronto

This paper examines the criminalization of women through various legal frameworks, including mandatory charging policies, immigration law, and sexual assault legislation, while highlighting the gaps in available resources and services. It offers recommendations for law reform, improved service provisions, and media engagement to better support criminalized women.



## Tort of Family Law

*Barbra Schlifer Clinic, Luke's Place*

A legal intervention put forward by Barbra Schlifer Clinic and Luke's Place to the Ontario Court of Appeal about a new family law tort. The intervention seeks to uphold findings from a recent law case to recognize a common law tort of family violence given the limitations of the new federal *Divorce Act*.



## Failure to Protect: Social and institutional factors that prevent access to justice in family violence/family law cases

*Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence*

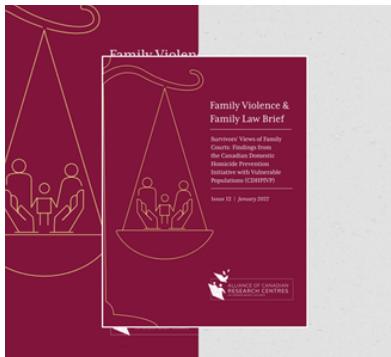
This report emphasizes that, despite some positive developments in Canadian family case law, many abused women and children face significant barriers to accessing justice due to systemic gender inequalities and institutional obstacles. It calls for comprehensive reforms, including better education for legal professionals, expanded legal aid, and improved access to specialized support, to ensure that women and children can achieve genuine access to family law justice.



## Traumatic Brain Injury and Intimate Partner Violence: Challenges for survivors involved in the family court system

*RESOLVE Manitoba, Alliance for Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence*

This brief examines the intersection of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and IPV highlighting the challenges that TBI presents for survivors navigating the family court system. It addresses the role of front-line service providers in recognizing IPV-related head trauma and the specific difficulties survivors with TBI face in the family court system.



## **Survivors' Views of Family Courts: Findings from the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations (CDHPIVP)**

*Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children; Alliance of Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence*

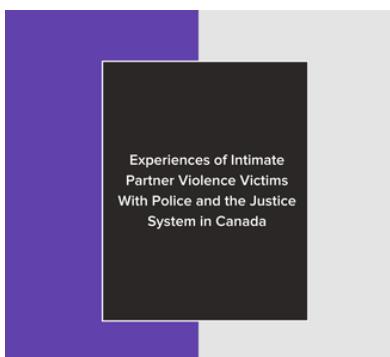
This brief highlights recent changes to Canada's *Divorce Act* that aim to address family violence and the need for legal professionals to effectively understand coercive control in practice. Drawing on interviews with domestic violence survivors, it emphasizes their critical insights into how abusers exploit the legal system and the barriers they encounter in family court. There is a need for a holistic, trauma-informed approach to better support survivors.



## **The co-occurrence of parental alienation claims and intimate partner violence in family court**

*RESOLVE Manitoba, Alliance for Canadian Research Centres on Gender-Based Violence*

This brief examines the connection between IPV and claims of parental alienation in family court, highlighting the potential for misuse of the parental alienation concept, particularly by perpetrators of IPV. It outlines challenges faced by survivors, best practices for family lawyers dealing with co-occurring allegations, and necessary reforms to improve the family law system in Manitoba.



## **Experiences of intimate partner violence victims with police and justice system in Canada**

*Western University*

This study investigates the legal responses to IPV by analyzing survey data from 2,831 victims regarding their experiences with police and the justice system. Findings reveal that while over 35% of victims reported incidents to the police, perceptions of helpfulness were mixed and few victims engaged with the criminal and family law systems. The findings highlight the variability in satisfaction with encounters with officials that shapes victims' experiences seeking help.



## "They just don't care": Women charged with domestic violence in Ottawa

*Anita Grace, PhD Candidate, Carleton University*

This study investigates the experiences of 18 women charged by police in incidents of IPV in Ontario, highlighting significant failures in the application of mandatory charging policies designed to identify primary aggressors. The women's accounts reveal feelings of betrayal and complicity from police, leading many to express reluctance to seek police protection in the future, even if they face further violence.



## Failure to protect: Criminalization of survivors of intimate partner violence

*Eden Hoffer, PhD Candidate, Western University*

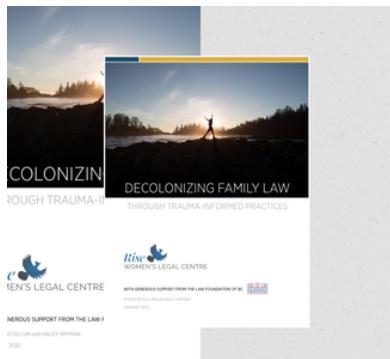
The article critically evaluates Canada's mandatory charging policies for IPV which, despite their initial intention to protect victims, have led to the criminalization of many women who are themselves victims. It discusses how these policies often fail to identify primary aggressors, disproportionately charge women, and create long-lasting negative consequences. The article emphasizes the need for a trauma- and violence-informed approach that addresses systemic factors contributing to IPV rather than relying on punitive legal responses.



## The 2021 Divorce Act: Using statutory interpretation principles to support substantive equality for women and children

*The FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children*

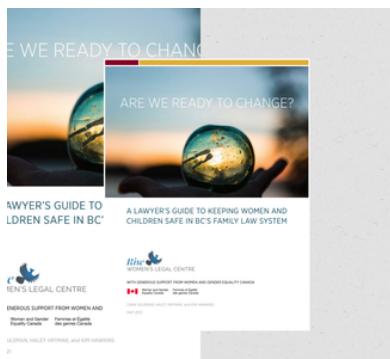
This brief provides statutory interpretation of relevant child support provisions related to the new Divorce Act in Canada. The brief considers the case outcomes of *Michel v. Graydon*, the Divorce Act itself, social and historical context, and Canada's international obligations relating to family violence. It argues that courts must recognize and respect that each child is distinct from their parents and that family violence provisions empower courts to protect children from violence.



## Decolonizing family law through trauma-informed practices

*Rise Women's Legal Centre*

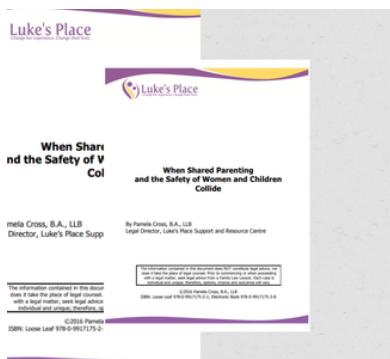
This report discusses some of the ways the B.C. family law system fails to meet the needs of Indigenous parents. The colonial framework of family court proceedings excludes Indigenous worldviews and values and rely culturally inappropriate and inaccessible ways of communication. This report makes recommendations to decolonize the legal system and improve the capacity of family law professionals to serve Indigenous clients.



## Are we ready to change?

*Rise Women's Legal Centre*

Based on focus groups and interviews with frontline workers, experts, and survivors, this report offers guidance to the legal system to improve its response to family violence. This includes guidance to lawyers to better serve survivors from a trauma- and violence-informed approach, and areas for law reform or strategic litigation.



## When shared parenting and the safety of women and children collide

*Luke's Place*

This paper reviews the structural and systemic barriers that contribute to harmful family court decisions about child custody and access. These barriers include “gender-neutral” framework of family court, the limited understanding of the long-term dynamics of abuse, the heteronormative ideology of families, and the role of the family court process itself. Recommended best practices includes adopting family violence provisions that consider the best interests of children, providing education for judges and lawyers on family violence, ensuring access to legal representation and changing the culture of family court.



## Through the looking glass: The experiences of unrepresented abused women in family court

### *Luke's Place*

This report presents a needs assessment of programs and services for survivors without legal representation within the family law process, and the challenges for unrepresented women. The project found that financial limitations were the primary reason for the lack of legal representation. The report concludes with legal, policy, and service recommendations to promote women's fundamental right to legal representation in family court.



## It shouldn't be this hard: A gender-based analysis of family law, family court, and violence against women

### *Luke's Place*

This paper examines the Ontario family law and family court system using a gender-based intersectional lens. It highlights key issues for women experiencing violence and their children leaving abusive relationships. These key challenges are the lack of legal representation, custody and access, legal bullying, and the effect of intersecting identities and multiple legal issues for survivor. Best practices are identified for provincial family law legislation, the Family Court Support Worker program, and education and awareness among family law students and professionals.



## Domestic Violence and the access to justice within the family law and intersecting legal systems

*Jennifer Koshan, Wanda Wiegers, Janet Mosher, Wendy Chan, and Michaela Keet*

This paper introduces a special collection focused on Canadian family law system's impact on women's and children's safety and their access to justice. The collated articles highlight the many challenges survivors encounter, such as lack of access to legal representation and lack of understanding about domestic violence among family law professionals. The articles into the reasons for limited systemic change and how to advance women's access to justice.

# CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The research below highlights how children and young people are affected by IPV as witnesses or direct victims. Studies show a growing awareness of the implications IPV and family violence has for children and young people's well-being yet more practice-based research is needed to improve inter-sectoral collaboration and safety for women, children and young people.

## **Speak Out: Addressing 2SLGBTQ Youth Dating Violence**



*Egale Canada*

Egale supports 2SLGBTQI individuals in Canada facing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Participants had diverse dating partners, with some reporting controlling behaviors and factors influencing experiences of dating violence. Most youths did not seek help after experiencing dating violence. Those who sought help mainly turned to friends or family, with online resources being preferred for information and peer-to-peer support.

## **Exploring the Relationship Between Child Maltreatment, Intimate Partner Violence Victimization, and Self-Injurious Thoughts and Behaviors.**



*University of Ottawa*

Child maltreatment is linked to young adult self-injury, with intimate partner violence victimization mediating the relationship between child maltreatment and self-injurious behaviors. However, this mediation was not found for self-injurious thoughts. Understanding these relationships can help support self-injuring young adults better.



## **Penalizing women's fear: intimate partner violence and parental alienation in Canadian child custody cases.**

*University of Ottawa, University of British Columbia*

The paper examines Canadian family law cases (2014–2018) involving parental alienation and family violence. It highlights concerning trends in discounting intimate partner violence in cases with both claims. The rise of shared parenting norms influences the unquestioned acceptance of alienation. The study advocates for prioritizing safety and listening to women's and children's perspectives in such cases.



## **Exploring subtypes of children's exposure to intimate partner violence.**

*University of Toronto; Wayne State University; Carleton University; King's University College*

The study examines increased investigations of children exposed to intimate partner violence (IPV) in Ontario between 2008 and 2013, focusing on direct witness, indirect exposure, and emotional violence. Results show a rise in investigations, particularly for emotional violence, with implications for service responses. Referrals from police, custodial parents, and schools have increased, highlighting the need for improved collaboration among various agencies to support affected families effectively.

# ECONOMIC SECURITY

The research and briefs below illustrate the interconnection between IPV and the lack of economic security for survivors; the latter is an outcome of IPV and a barrier to survivors' economic freedom. The reports below also provide suggestions to improve Ontario's social assistance programs to help increase survivors' economic standing.



## Economic abuse among senior immigrant women: Literature and research report

WomanACT

The report delves into economic abuse among senior immigrant women, exploring how gender, age, and immigration intersect to influence experiences of gender-based violence and help-seeking behaviors. Community-based research with service providers and affected women informs the findings on economic abuse dynamics.



## "Hidden in the everyday" – Financial Abuse as a Form of Intimate Partner Violence in the Toronto Area

University of Guelph (Research Facility for Women's Health and Wellbeing) & WomanACT

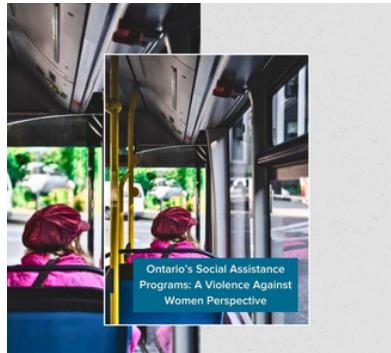
Limited research exists on financial abuse in intimate partner violence, but it's a common form of control over women, impacting their ability to escape violence and achieve financial independence. This report uses qualitative data from surveys, focus groups, and interviews explores the experiences and effects of financial abuse, along with challenges and opportunities in addressing it offering key findings and recommendations for policies, programs, and practices to identify, prevent, and respond to financial abuse.



### **When social assistance reproduces social inequality: intimate partner violence survivors' adverse experiences with subsidized housing.**

*University of Guelph*

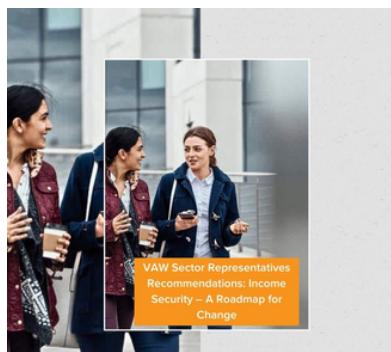
This study on women's experiences with priority-subsidized housing programs for IPV survivors found that while important, these programs can hinder women's efforts to escape abuse. Results suggest integrating subsidized and nonsubsidized housing, removing eligibility based on abuse extent, and allowing women to choose their housing for improved practices and policies.



### **Ontario's Social Assistance Programs: A Violence against Women Perspective.**

*WomanACT*

Poverty and violence against women are linked, with poverty increasing women's vulnerability to violence. Financial hardships can trap women in abusive relationships. This policy brief examines Ontario's social assistance programs' impact on women and suggests improvements based on a forum held in Toronto in 2018 with various stakeholders attended by more than 40 agencies, advocates, researchers and women with lived experiences of violence.



### **VAW Sector Representatives Recommendations: Income Security- A Roadmap for Change**

*WomanACT*

Addressing income security for women is crucial to combat gender inequality and violence. Poverty and violence are linked, trapping women in abusive situations. This policy brief in response to a provincial report suggests changes to housing benefits and social assistance programs in Ontario.



## YWCA Toronto Submission to Ontario's New Poverty Reduction Strategy

YWCA Toronto

This submission to the Government of Ontario regarding their poverty reduction strategy highlights the concerns of those accessing YWCA Toronto services, including shelter, settlement and employment programs, and frontline staff. Key areas of concern were housing, social assistance, employment, food security, mental health, and youth. The report culminated in recommendations for a provincial poverty reduction strategy that is gender-responsive.



## An Intersectional Approach to COVID-19 She-Covery

YWCA Toronto

This analysis provides an intersectional lens on the differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for women, girls, and feminized people. The analysis incorporated intersections of race, immigration status, gender identity and expression, age, and disability. This intersectional analysis aimed to support pandemic recovery planning and the development of policy responses that meets the needs of women and girls, and address the heightened gender-based social and economic disparities which resulted from the pandemic.

# EMPLOYMENT

The following research studies conducted explore survivors' barriers to employment and the effects of IPV on their employment. The findings from these studies reinforce IPV as a matter of occupational health and safety for employers in Ontario, and as a matter of economic justice for women in Ontario.



## Intersections between employment and safety among racialized women

WomanACT

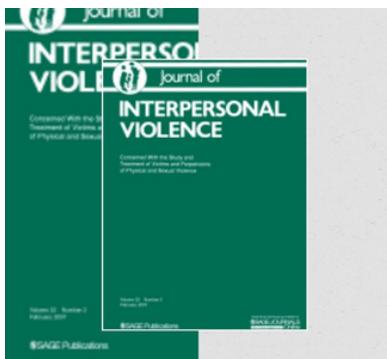
This research report explores the experiences of racialized survivors in accessing and maintaining employment. Qualitative data gathered through surveys and interviews found racism, trauma, and intimate partner violence create overwhelming and complex barriers to finding and maintaining employment, and that racialized survivors want trauma-informed and anti-racist workplaces.



## Barriers to Employability and Employment for Women Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence

Interval House

This report outlines the barriers to employment and employability that survivors of intimate partner violence face. The research identified common barriers and an overarching finding that women experience barriers in their own way, and coping with barriers is an overarching systemic barrier that is survivors face.



## **Relationships Among Intimate Partner Violence, Work, and Health**

PreVAiL Research Network, Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children

This journal article presents findings from a pan-Canadian online survey on the relationships among IPV, work, and health. Among half of those who experienced IPV in the study reported violence occurring at or near the workplace; employment was identified as a potential protective factor for survivors' health.



## **The Impact of Domestic Violence in the Workplace: Results From a Pan-Canadian Survey.**

Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children

This research survey identifies the scope and impact of domestic violence on workers and workplaces. The majority of respondents reported domestic violence negatively affected their performance.



## **Can Work Be Safe, When Home Isn't? Initial Findings of a Pan-Canadian Survey on Domestic Violence and the Workplace**

Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children, Canadian Labour Congress, Western Faculty of Information and Media Studies

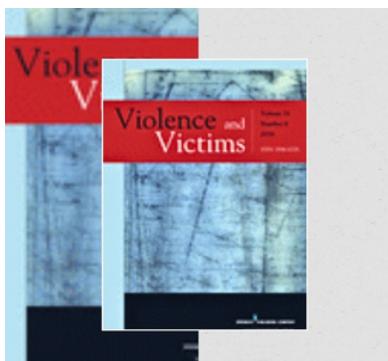
The first ever Canadian survey on domestic violence in the workplace aimed at improving workplace policies around domestic violence (DV). The majority of respondents believed that DV impacts the work lives of survivors but most respondents also thought employers and unions are not aware of how DV impacts on workers experiencing violence.



## Intersections Between Employment and Safety Amongst Racialized Women in Toronto: Perceptions from Service Providers

*WomanACT*

Service providers were consulted on their views of the unique barriers faced by racialized survivors in gaining and sustaining employment. This report summarizes views from service providers on the barriers to maintaining employment and the employment support needs for racialized survivors.



## Gender Differences in Workplace Disclosure and Supports for Domestic Violence: Results of a Pan- Canadian Survey

*Faculty of Information and Media Studies, Western University*

This study examined the role of gender in workplace disclosures experiences of domestic violence. More than 40% of participants disclosed at work, usually to coworkers or supervisors. The supports received were generally seen as helpful, but negative consequences of disclosure were reported.

# SERVICES

The research below outlines intersecting barriers for accessing violence against women services and related legal, housing, employment, children and youth services. Emphasis has been placed on research focused on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for survivors and service provision. A clear thread emerges which ties critical systems gaps prior to COVID-19 with many of the challenges faced by survivors and service providers during the pandemic, and the need for coordinated responses and policies during post-pandemic recovery.



## **People Experiencing Marginalization and the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic Response on Violence Against Women Services**

MAP Centre for Urban Health Solutions Health and WomanACT

The MARCO-VAW study investigated evolving responses to violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic in Toronto, and to develop actionable recommendations. Virtual programming was the most common adaptation, which posed challenges to frontline staff and leadership.



## **Gender-Based Violence Service Provision and Access in Times of Crisis**

WomanACT, University of Guelph

This brief examines the main changes experienced in the gender-based violence sector during the COVID-19 for survivors and service providers. Main takeaways are the need for government transparency in decision-making, revised legislation and policies around funding and service provision categorization, and investment in the sector's flexibility and adaptability.



## Reducing Stigma: Exploring the intersections between trauma, race and criminalization

*WomanACT, Elizabeth Fry Toronto*

This research explores the relationship between trauma and criminalization among racialized women and highlights the dangerous stigma they face. It discusses how IPV can be a pathway into the criminal justice system for survivors. The report speaks to what is needed to improve access to services for racialized survivors with experiences of criminalization.



## Tech for Women's Justice Report

*WomanACT*

This report examines the intersections between intimate partner violence, legal help and technology. It draws on data that was gathered through interviews and surveys with survivors of intimate partner violence and explores their experiences in using technology to access legal information and support.



## Community Perceptions: Exploring the practices of risk assessment, information sharing and safety planning

*WomanACT*

This report explores service providers' experiences of risk assessment and information sharing, and explores their views and challenges to risk assessment, safety planning, and information sharing. The findings underscored next steps for evaluating risk assessment tools, and capacity-building on safety planning and information sharing to reduce high-risk IPV and domestic homicide.



## Exploring the intersections between violence against women, access to justice and technology

WomanACT

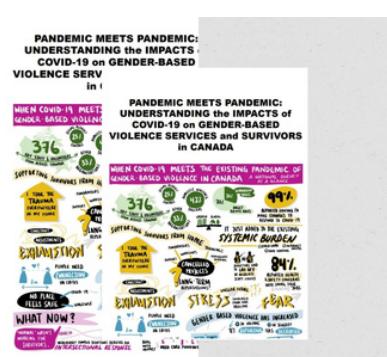
This literature review explores the literature in the areas of violence against women, access to justice, and access to technology. It explores the role of technology in increasing survivor's access to legal information and services as well as potential risks and considerations.



## Violence Against Women Sector Survey: Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

WomanACT

This survey report summarizes the challenges and concerns of violence against women agencies in Toronto. Service providers who participated in the survey offered their insights on the impact of COVID-19 on survivors, shelters, agency operations and workforce, and the supports that are needed.



## Pandemic Meets Pandemic: Understanding the Impacts of COVID-19 on Gender-Based Violence Services and Survivors in Canada

Ending Violence Association of Canada, Anova

This report presents findings from a national survey on the challenges faced by frontline staff within anti-violence against women organizations during COVID-19. Findings from the survey illustrated the impact of the pandemic on survivors' experiences of violence, challenges for service provision, and the need to connect gender-based violence work to larger systems post-pandemic.



## **Policy Impacts on Violence Against Women in Canada: A Review of Literature on Selected Policies**

WomanACT

This literature review presents an overview of the impacts of selected federal and provincial (Ontario) policies on violence against women. The review finds that women are regularly required to prove their abuse in order to obtain services or supports; that policies do not always reflect the gendered experience of immigration, poverty, and homelessness; and that policies often reproduce conditions of women's economic insecurity and financial dependence.



## **Looking at COVID-19 effects on intimate partner and sexual violence organizations in Canada through a feminist political economy lens: a qualitative study.**

Université de Montréal and University of New Brunswick

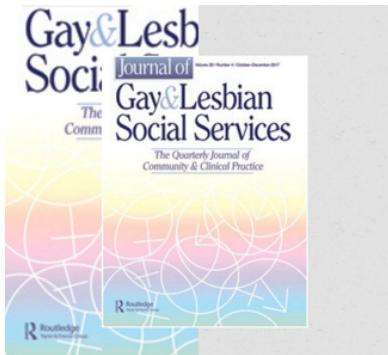
This study interviewed frontline and management staff from IPV and sexual violence organizations and programs in Canada to investigate the consequences of COVID-19 on service delivery. COVID-19 worsened pre-existing issues of underfunded and having a predominantly underpaid female staff and placed further restrictions on the scope and reach of the organizations.



## **Intimate Partner Violence in COVID-19: A Literature Review.**

University of Saskatchewan

This literature review explores the impact of COVID-19 on the prevalence and severity of IPV. The analysis reveals an elevated rate of IPV during the pandemic, and an increase in the severity of the abuse. Risk factors for increased IPV included financial factors, caregiver burnout, stress, and other factors.



## **It's a gap in awareness": Exploring service provision for LGBTQ2S survivors of intimate partner violence in Ontario, Canada**

*Wilfrid Laurier University and University of Guelph*

This study investigated the inclusion of LGBTQ2S IPV survivors in existing services and what inclusive service provision should look like. The data revealed recommendations at the direct service provision level, the organizational level, and overarching principles and values to adequately include LGBTQ2S IPV survivors.



## **We're so limited with what we actually can do if we follow all the rules": a qualitative study of the impact of COVID-19 public health protocols on violence against women services.**

*Western University, University of British Columbia, and the Violence against Women Services in a Pandemic Research Team*

This qualitative study of violence against women frontline staff and leadership in Ontario revealed a need for better communication and alignment among government and public health authorities, and consultation with the VAW sector, to tailor policies and protocols for minimizing harm to survivors and protecting public health and safety.



## **The Shadow Pandemic: A Qualitative Exploration of the Impacts of COVID-19 on Service Providers and Women Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence and Brain Injury.**

*Wilfrid Laurier University, KITE-Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, Rehabilitation Sciences Institute, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Institute of Health Policy, Management, and Evaluation*

Qualitative research project explored the impact of COVID-19 on survivors at the intersection of IPV and brain injury and service providers. Findings revealed increased rates and severity of IPV, and barriers to service provision and uptake, and a continued lack of IPV and brain injury awareness.



## Impacts of COVID-19 on the Coping Behaviours of Canadian Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence.

*The University of Western Ontario*

This study examined how coping strategies of survivors of IPV was influenced by COVID-19 and identified gaps to be addressed to support coping. The study concluded that public health measures for COVID-19 and future pandemics should be gender- and violence-informed.



## COVID-19, the Shadow Pandemic, and Access to Justice for Survivors of Domestic Violence.

*University of Calgary, York University, University of Saskatchewan*

This analysis examined responses to COVID-19 with a focus on the safety of women and children in the courts system. It was found that the pandemic further exposed many gaps which existed pre-pandemic in the areas of knowledge about domestic violence and supports and resources for women and children's safety.



## Service provider perspectives on how COVID-19 and pandemic restrictions have affected intimate partner and sexual violence survivors in Canada: a qualitative study.

*Université de Montréal, University of New Brunswick*

This study explored the perspectives of IPV and sexual violence frontline workers on how COVID-19 pandemic affected survivors. The results revealed several challenges and the need to adopt a more holistic approach to responding to IPV and sexual violence by addressing broader socioeconomic issues.



## Shecovery Project Factsheet

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

This Shecovery project addressed barriers experienced by gender-based violence survivors from underrepresented communities for post-COVID recovery. Research with service agencies and survivors demonstrated significant barriers to accessing supports and services for survivors, and barriers to service provision for frontline staff. The research also highlighted risk factors for Indigenous, racialized, and newcomer women for greater likelihood of experiencing violence.



## Gender-Based Violence Survivors' Voices and Experiences: Risk Assessment and Safety Planning

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

As part of a community-based research project, the Barbra Schlifer Clinic held consultations with survivors of gender-based violence to understand their experiences and perspectives on risk assessment and safety planning, and additional risk factors related to systemic oppressions. The key findings are recommendations for service-providers to adopt when supporting survivors.



## An Unequal Patchwork: Research on Risk Assessment & Safety Planning with Service Providers Across Canada

Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

A national consultation process with service providers found an "unequal patchwork" of risk assessment and safety planning practices and tools used across different settings. The need for wholistic and trauma-informed tools for service provider settings was also identified.



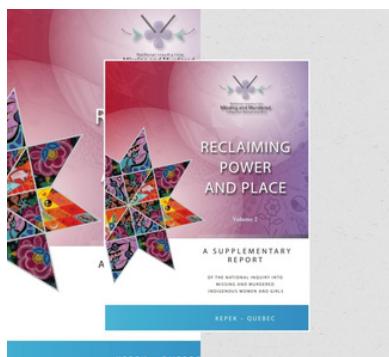
## **A Blueprint for Establishing Services for Immigrant, Refugee, Ethnocultural and Racialized Women Facing Intimate Partner Violence**

### *COSTI Immigrant Services*

This first half of the report includes research on Immigrant, Refugee, and Racialized Communities' experiences of intimate partner violence. The second half of the report lays out a blueprint for a program model to effectively provide support to Immigrant, Refugee, and Racialized survivors.

# INDIGENOUS WOMEN

The reports below provide detailed accounts of the prevalence of violence against Indigenous women and girls across Canada and the impact it has had for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities. The existing research highlights the structural drivers of colonialism and patriarchy that perpetuate intergenerational risk for IPV and family violence. These reports provide recommendations to Ontario and Federal governments, carving out Indigenous-led pathways to address missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG).



## Reclaiming Power and Place

*The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*

A two-volume report that shares testimony from survivors of violence, family members, experts, and Knowledge Keepers about the impact of colonial and patriarchal policies on Indigenous women and girls. The report delivers 231 individual Calls for Justice for governments, institution, social service providers, and industries.



## Improving the response of primary care providers to rural First Nation women who experience intimate partner violence: a qualitative study

*Laurentian University, Northern Ontario School of Medicine*

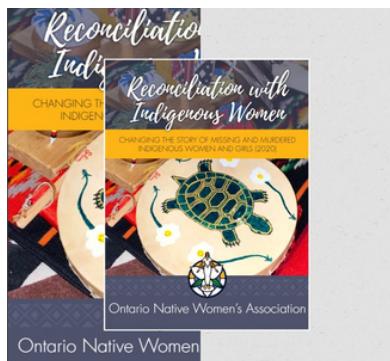
This community-based participatory study conducted with First Nations Health centres and teams located on Manitoulin Island to identify barriers and facilitators in the primary care setting to respond to First Nations who experience IPV. Results showed that healthcare providers feel a degree of unpreparedness to deal with First Nations survivors experiencing IPV.



## **Violent victimization and perceptions of safety: Experiences of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women in Canada**

*Loanna Heidinger, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics*

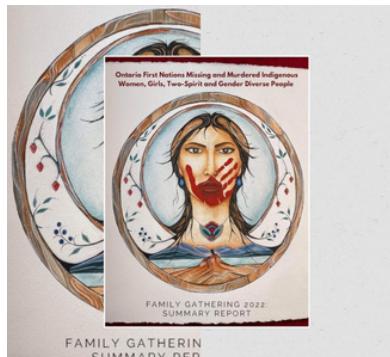
Statistical analysis of self-reported data on the prevalence of victim victimization (since age 15) and violence victimization in the past 12 months of Indigenous women in Canada. Results are disaggregated into First Nations, Métis, and Inuit experiences where possible. Almost 6 in 10 Indigenous women have experienced physical assault and nearly half have experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.



## **Changing the Story of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

*Ontario Native Women's Association*

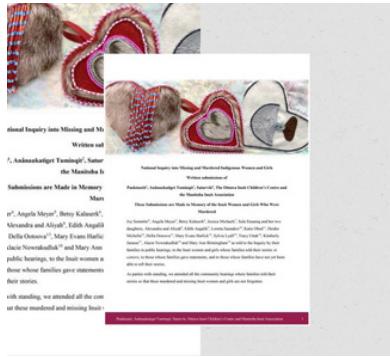
This report provides recommendations to be integrated into the National Action Plan to address violence against Indigenous women and girls. The recommendations are a summary of over 50 years of engagement with Indigenous women and girls on the issue of violence against Indigenous women.



## **Ontario First Nations Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit and Gender Diverse People: Family Gathering 2022 Summary Report**

*Chiefs of Ontario, Women's Initiatives Sector*

The First Nations Women's Council, an advisory council to the Ontario Chiefs in Assembly, held a virtual Family Gathering to work with Ontario First Nations families and survivors of MMIWG. This report summarizes themes from the Gathering and recommendations to be integrated in an Ontario First nations action plan on gender-based violence.



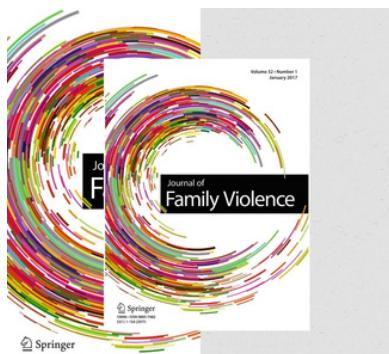
## **Written Submissions to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

*Pauktuutit, Anânaukatiget Tuminqit, Saturviit, the Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre, and the Manitoba Inuit Association*

Written submission to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls that focuses on the experiences of Inuit women and girls across Canada, including urban Inuit. The submission concludes with recommendations to address violence against Inuit women and girls.

# RURAL & REMOTE COMMUNITIES

The research below highlights the unique needs and challenges of IPV survivors living in rural and remote communities. Research clearly shows environmental factors related to rurality or remoteness such as geographical isolation and lack of service capacity does increase survivors' vulnerability. A better understanding of rural survivors and service providers' needs and challenges can improve gender-based violence resources in Ontario's rural communities.



## Intimate Partner Violence and COVID-19 in Rural, Remote, and Northern Canada: Relationship, Vulnerability and Risk.

*Aurora Research Institute, University of Alberta, Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan, University of British Columbia, University of Western Ontario*

This commentary identifies the unique impact of COVID-19 on service providers and IPV survivors in rural, remote, and northern communities. Recommendations include enhanced safety planning, alternate housing for survivors, and suggestions for service providers.



## When I decided to leave, I had nothing": The resilience of rural women experiencing economic abuse in the context of gender-based violence.

*The University of Western Ontario*

This study explored the effects of economic abuse and economic insecurity on IPV survivors living in rural Ontario. Interviews with survivors and service providers identified forms of economic abuse, lack of economic self-sufficiency and rural economic setbacks as barriers to women's resilience.



## **Responding to Intimate Partner Violence: Challenges Faced Among Service Providers in Northern Communities.**

*University of Regina*

This study examined the needs of women IPV survivors in a northern community in Canada. A qualitative analysis highlighted survivors and service providers' unique needs in northern regions related to geographical isolation. The article also provides suggestions to improve resources and services.



## **Regional service providers' understandings of rurality and intimate partner violence.**

*University of Guelph, Brandon University*

This study examined service providers' understandings of rural attitudes toward IPV. The case studies illustrate how cultural interpretations of gender and family norms are embedded in rural place and influence attitudes towards IPV by othering and minimizing the experiences of IPV. This article provides recommendations for rural development and service providers.

*The Current State of Intimate Partner Violence in Ontario*

