

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Against 2SLGBTQIA+ People



Neighbours, Friends & Families

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Research on and Prevalence of GBV and IPV

2SLGBTQIA+ people are one of the most at-risk populations for experiencing both *gender-based violence* (GBV) and *intimate partner violence* (IPV) due to their location at the unique intersections of homophobia and transphobia alongside other forms of oppression such as sexism, misogyny, racism, and ableism. Existing research on GBV and IPV is largely framed through a *cisheteronormative* lens, reinforcing the *gender binary*, largely focusing on women and girls, and suggesting that both GBV and IPV are only committed by men against women. This provides a narrow and limited scope that fails to recognize the complex nature of GBV and IPV, while also leading to limited support resources for 2SLGBTQIA+ victims/survivors.

Despite this, limited studies so far have shown that 2SLGBTQIA+ people, particularly trans people, experience much higher rates of both GBV and IPV. Research has indicated that:

- In Canada, 67% of LGB women¹ and 60% of trans women² experience some form of intimate partner violence.
- Similarly, in Ontario 57% of trans people³ experience unwanted sexual behaviour, and Canadian LGB women (50%) and men (26%)⁴ experience sexual assault.
- 91% of murders of trans people worldwide (1995-2005) were people of colour.⁵

These statistics show the disproportionate high rates of violence that 2SLGBTQIA+ people are subjected to. Also important to note is that those who sit along the axes of multiple intersecting identities (racialized, immigrant/refugee, disabled, lower socioeconomic status, neurodivergent) are at a higher risk of experiencing GBV/IPV, particularly targeted towards those identities.



¹ Government of Canada. 2024. "Facts, stats and WAGE's impact: Gender-based violence."

² Trans Pulse Canada. 2021. "Trans Women and Intimate Partner Violence: Fundamentals for Service Providers."

³ Trans Pulse Project. 2014. "Avoidance of Public Spaces by Trans Ontarians."

⁴ Government of Canada. 2024. "Facts, stats and WAGE's impact: Gender-based violence."

⁵ Messinger & Guadalupe-Diaz (2020): *Transgender Intimate Partner Violence*, p. 140.

Unique Forms of GBV and IPV in 2SLGBTQIA+ Contexts

2SLGBTQIA+ people experience unique forms of GBV and IPV as compared to heterosexual and cisgender people, though there are overlaps and commonalities across experiences. Notably, GBV and IPV are about the abuser exerting control and power over the victim/survivor in various ways, such as financial, social, sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. Some examples of unique ways in which 2SLGBTQIA+ people are targeted abusively include:

1. Disclosure:

Threatening to disclose (“out”) their 2SLGBTQIA+ identity or prevent them from sharing their 2SLGBTQIA+ identity;

2. Financial/Material Control:

Withholding important items (e.g. gender affirming apparel) and/or prevent (financial) access to such items;

3. Targeting of Features:

The targeting (physically and/or emotionally) gender-specific features or body parts (existence or lack of features/parts);

4. Invalidation/Gaslighting:

The invalidation of one’s 2SLGBTQIA+ identity (“you are too __”, “you’re not __ enough”); may use misgendering as a weapon;

5. Isolation:

Encouraging/enforcing isolation from 2SLGBTQIA+ spaces, which are a critical protective factor for positive mental health and wellbeing.



Challenges for 2SLGBTQIA+ Victims/Survivors

Due to the ways in which both GBV and IPV have been located in cisheteronormativity and the gender binary, many 2SLGBTQIA+ victims/survivors have difficulty in naming their experience as abuse. This can also be attributed to the fact that there are limited resources and information on what constitutes a healthy, respectful relationship within a 2SLGBTQIA+ context. In fact, as many as 27% of trans people who experience IPV are unable/unwilling to name that experience as IPV.⁶ This exemplifies how a lack of support and services specific to 2SLGBTQIA+ needs perpetuates a cycle of harm, highlighting the importance of representation.



Moreover, resources available specifically for 2SLGBTQIA+ victims/survivors (e.g. sexual assault crisis centers, IPV shelters) are limited, thus forcing them to go without support or access support in spaces that are potentially non-affirming. In addition to policies that support hetero and cisgender norms, and thus may result in 2SLGBTQIA+ people feeling excluded, 2SLGBTQIA+ people are more likely to experience unequal treatment, verbal harassment, and/or physical assault from service providers, staff, and/or fellow clients.⁷ Trans and non-binary people often avoid seeking formal support because available services are designed within a cisheteronormative framework. These services fail to represent their experiences, and many fear facing further gender-based violence when trying to access support.⁸

Strategies for Supporting Victims/Survivors of GBV/IPV

Everyone has a role to play in challenging the underlying systems that enable GBV and IPV to continue. With that said, it is critical for people to learn the necessary skills in order to provide affirming support for 2SLGBTQIA+ victims/survivors of GBV and IPV. This is important for service providers, but also for the average person – as many as 50 to 89% of 2SLGBTQIA+ people report seeking help from informal sources, such as family, friends, coworkers, and neighbours.⁹ This exemplifies the critical role each person has to play in being a safe person for victims/survivors. Some general strategies for showing 2SLGBTQIA+ affirming support include:

- **Unconscious Bias** – no one is immune to unconscious biases. Take time to consider which biases you hold about victims/survivors, abusers, gender, and sexuality.
- **Education** – work to educate yourself on warning signs of GBV/IPV. Challenge stereotypes and misinformation that you hear about GBV/IPV, providing education about the effects and realities of GBV/IPV.
- **Inclusive Language** – make a conscious effort to use inclusive language. Avoid gender-specific assumptions (e.g. “did he abuse you”, “she is a victim”) and respect the language and terms people use for themselves.
- **Believe, Validate, and Support** – if a victim/survivor discloses to you, believe them. Validate their experiences, and connect them to affirming support.



⁶ Messinger & Guadalupe-Diaz (2020): *Transgender Intimate Partner Violence*, p. 6.

⁷ Yerke & DeFeo (2016): “Redefining Intimate Partner Violence Beyond the Binary”, p. 976.

⁸ Wisdom2Action. “Queering Gender-Based Violence Prevention & Response in Canada: Toolkit & Report.”

⁹ Kurdyla, Messinger & Ramirez (2021): “Transgender Intimate Partner Violence and Help-Seeking”, p. 1049.

Glossary

2SLGBTQIA+

An acronym used to describe the community of non-cis/hetero people. The letters stand for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual, while the plus (+) represents those whose letters are not listed in the acronym but are part of the community.

Cisgender (Cis)

Describes people whose sex assigned at birth and gender align.

Cisheteronormative

Refers to placing cisgender and heterosexual as the “norm”, to the detriment and exclusion of all other experiences of gender and sexuality.

Gender Based Violence (GBV)

GBV is an umbrella term referring to “any physical, sexual, or other emotional violence perpetrated on the basis of socially ascribed gender differences.”¹⁰

Gender Binary

Describes how all parts of society – culture, healthcare, education, economy, government, religion – is rooted in the idea that there are only two genders (“man” and “woman”), that these genders are opposite, and any deviation from the gender binary is inappropriate.

Heterosexual (Hetero)

Describes people who primarily experience attraction to people of another gender. Most commonly used to refer to women who are primarily attracted to men (and vice versa).

Intersectionality

Describes how systems of oppression, power, and inequity “interlock with” and “mutually reinforce” one another, particularly when someone is part of multiple marginalized communities.¹¹

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

IPV describes “physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner regardless of marriage status, cohabitation, or sexual intimacy.”¹²

Queer

An umbrella term referring to people whose sexuality is non-heterosexual/straight.

Trans/Transgender

An umbrella term that refers to people whose gender does not match the sex that was assigned at birth. This includes trans men, trans women, and those outside of the gender binary.



¹⁰ Wirtz, Poteat, Malik & Glass (2018): “Gender-Based Violence Against Transgender People”, p. 227.

¹¹ Gill (2018): “Survivor-Centered Research”, p. 559.

¹² Pietzmeier, Hughto, Potter, Deutsch, & Reisner: “Development of a Novel Tool”, p. 2377.

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Sydney Brouillard-Coyle (Ney/Nem/Nir) is a published author (*A Pocket Guide to Pronouns*) and current PhD student at Western University in the department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies. Nir research focuses on the importance of creative arts spaces for trans liberation. Ney hold a Masters of Arts in Social Justice and Community Engagement, a Bachelor of Arts in Women and Gender Studies, and a Bachelor of Music. Ney are a Peer Leader Advisor with the [Trans Link Network](#), an intersectional network bringing together community and healthcare organizations across Canada to enhance supports for trans and gender diverse survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Ney also founded [Rainbow Allyship](#), a company dedicated to providing queer and trans Allyship Training for individuals, businesses, and organizations.

Positionality Statement

Sydney is a queer, transgender, asexual, and neurodivergent settler residing on the unceded and traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishnaabe, and Haudenosaunee peoples.

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