

**SETTING THE STAGE FOR A FEDERAL STRATEGY
AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

Vision, Outcomes & Principles

Message from the Minister of Status of Women



The Honourable Patty
Hajdu P.C., M.P.

Achieving gender equality is a priority for the Government of Canada. We know that as long as gender-based violence continues to exist, gender equality will remain out of reach.

I have been mandated to lead a federal strategy focused on preventing and addressing gender-based violence. This federal strategy will be critical to strengthen the Government of Canada's overall response to gender-based violence. We must get it right and we can't do it alone.

To develop the strategy, we need to build on the important work already underway by provincial and territorial governments. We also need the help of experts, advocates, survivors, academia, civil society and others to ensure that we address the diverse needs of all Canadians, especially those who are most at-risk of being victimized. In short, we need to listen. That's what our engagement process is all about.

This summer, we are engaging with a broad range of Canadians. We will speak with people representing the perspectives of young women, women and girls with disabilities, Indigenous women and girls, LGBTQQI2S people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, two-spirit and gender-non conforming), men and boys working to end gender-based violence, and more. Their voices are important and their knowledge and expertise will inform the development of the federal strategy.

This document is intended to guide those discussions, but not script them. We are setting the stage for the federal strategy, but we are also looking for fresh ideas and perspectives to inform our work. This process must be dynamic and inclusive, if it is to be productive. I look forward to getting started.

The Honourable Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.

VISION:

The Government of Canada's long-term vision for this work is to **eliminate all forms of gender-based violence in public and private spheres.**

CONTEXT:

To contribute to this vision, the Minister of Status of Women, the Honourable Patty Hajdu, has been mandated to develop a ***federal strategy against gender-based violence (the federal strategy)***.

To inform the development of the *federal strategy*, we are reaching out to Canadians throughout summer 2016 to hear various perspectives on how to strengthen the federal approach to addressing and preventing gender-based violence.

For more information about our engagement plan, see: <http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/violence/strategy-strategie/index-en.html>

The purpose of this document is to set out:

- definitions and background information on gender-based violence
- areas where the federal government takes action to address and prevent gender-based violence
- key proposed outcomes for the federal strategy
- guiding principles to support the strategy's development and implementation

What is Gender-Based Violence?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is **violence perpetrated against someone based on their gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender.**

Violence against women and girls is one form of GBV. GBV also has a disproportionate impact on LGBTQQI2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and two-spirit) and gender-non conforming people.

Forms and Impacts of Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to two key forms of violence, including:

- ***Interpersonal violence***, which refers to an act of economic, sexual, psychological, emotional or other violence perpetrated by an individual, community or group against another individual, community or group; and
- ***Structural violence***¹, which refers to any form of structural inequality or institutional discrimination that puts someone at a disadvantage to other people within that person's family, household or community.

Specifically, GBV includes any act of violence or abuse that can result in ***physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering***. Examples of types of violence and abuse^a include:

- physical violence
- sexual violence (including child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation)
- emotional and psychological violence (including threats and intimidation)
- harassment
- online violence/technology-facilitated violence
- financial abuse

Across the forms of violence, women and girls are most likely to be victimized by men and young men **they know** through interpersonal relationships, including intimate/dating partners, acquaintances and friends.²

Violence can have **lifelong impacts** on one's physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health. Impacts can include disabilities, including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancy,³ substance use, absence from school or work and social isolation⁴. These impacts are often magnified for marginalized populations, including LGBTQQI2S people, Indigenous (First Nation, Métis or Inuit) women and girls, sex workers, and women and girls with disabilities.

Violence affects different people in different ways and is influenced by a range of factors. Early experiences of violence or other adverse early childhood events can be a risk factor for being victimized later in life and/or for others it can be a risk factor for engaging in violent behaviour.

^a See glossary in Annex A for definitions

Violence can also have impacts across generations, leading to cycles of violence and abuse within families and/or communities.

The Roots of Gender-Based Violence

GBV is a *product* of an unequal society and is a *barrier* to achieving gender equality.

It has its roots in the patriarchal structure of society, and is intensified by other forms of discrimination, including, racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and poverty. These structural inequalities maintain power imbalances, put some populations at greater risk of being victimized, and also act as a barrier to accessing supports.

GBV is supported by gender stereotypes that support **rigid conceptions of gender roles** (what it means to be a “woman” and what it means to be a “man”) as well as one’s sexuality (who should be attracted to whom and what kinds of romantic, sexual and family relationships are seen as “normal” or “acceptable”). GBV is also the result of attitudes that foster violence against women and girls, and other at-risk populations (for example, in messaging in media/social media)⁵.

Gender-Based Violence in Canada

Violence affects people of all genders, ages, cultures, ethnicities, religions, geographic locations as well as individuals from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. However, **women and girls** are more at risk of certain forms of violence:

- In 2014, women were more likely than men, overall, to self-report being **victims of violence**⁶
- Women are 11 times more likely than men to be a target of police-reported **sexual violence**⁷
- Girls and young women are four times more likely than boys and young men to be victims of police-reported **sexual assault**⁸
- Women over 15 years of age represent roughly 80% of all **police-reported intimate partner violence**, and are three times more likely than men to report being **criminally harassed**⁹

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- Women and girls are twice as likely as men and boys to report experiencing **family violence** to police¹⁰
- Women and girls represent almost 70% of victims associated with police-reported **cybercrime incidents**¹¹
- Women are almost four times as likely as men to self-report experiencing **sexual harassment in the workplace or at a workplace function**¹²

Additionally, many incidents of violence do not come to the attention of police. We know, for example, that 70% of incidents of spousal violence are not reported to police¹³.

Some populations are more at risk than others

- **Young women** aged 15-24 years are most at risk of experiencing police-reported violence¹⁴
- **Indigenous women** are twice as likely to be violently victimized as Indigenous men and approximately three times more likely to be violently victimized than non-Indigenous women or men¹⁵.
- **Women with disabilities** are 2 times more likely to self-report severe physical violence (i.e., beaten, kicked, bit or hit) and 3 times more likely to self-report being forced into sexual activity¹⁶
- People self-identifying as **homosexual or bisexual** are 3 times more likely than heterosexuals to be victims of self-reported violence¹⁷
- **Transgender people** are almost twice as likely to self-report ever experiencing intimate partner violence, compared to the average rate experienced by women¹⁸
- **Senior women** are at a higher risk of self-reported emotional and sexual abuse compared to senior men¹⁹

- Women **living in the territories** are victimized at a rate 8 times higher than those living in the provinces. **Remote and isolated communities** face particular challenges related to access and availability of support²⁰

While **newcomer and migrant women and girls** do not report higher rates of violence, they may be more vulnerable and less likely to report violence due to isolation, racism, language and cultural barriers, economic dependence, and a lack of knowledge about community resources.²¹

ROLES IN ADDRESSING GBV:

In identifying broad themes where the federal government can strengthen its approach to GBV, we recognize we are one actor among many.

All orders of government, the private sector, philanthropic organizations, and civil society groups and citizens **have a role to play** in ending gender-based violence.

This includes the important work of **provinces and territories**, all of which have strategies and action plans to address various forms of gender-based violence.

- These strategies recognize the key role of provincial/territorial governments in providing health, educational and social services (for example, shelter operations, victim services), as well as the administration of civil and criminal justice. This includes policing and prosecuting criminal offences (except in the territories), and the administration of the civil and criminal courts. On First Nations reserves, the federal government provides funding for health, education and social service.

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Examples of **federal activities** to address and prevent GBV include:

- supporting **research and data collection** on the nature and extent of GBV and what works to prevent and address it
- strengthening the effectiveness of the **justice, health and housing systems** to protect and support victims/survivors (for example, laws* that prohibit and provide responses to GBV, victims' rights at the federal level, RCMP front-line services and training, correctional programming for federal offenders (sentenced to two years' or more imprisonment), capital funding for shelters and transition houses)
- providing funding to help **support communities and organizations to prevent and address violence** (for example, program funding for projects, tools and resources, and to improve access to supports)
- **raising awareness of the underlying causes and harms of GBV**, including by challenging gender-stereotypes; promoting positive, respectful and non-violent masculinities; and sensitizing Canadians that violence against women is wrong and is a violation of women's human rights

* Such laws include the Criminal Code, the Divorce Act, and the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act

Eliminating gender-based violence crosses a number of areas of federal responsibility^b, some of which are shared jurisdiction with the provinces and territories. These include:

- National statistics and research
- Criminal law and family law
- Public safety
- Housing
- Immigration
- Indigenous affairs
- Public health
- Federal workplaces

The federal government has committed to a number of actions related to GBV. These actions include:

^b See Annex B for a list of specific federal departmental roles

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- Launching an ***inquiry into murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls*** in Canada
- ***Reviewing the criminal justice system***, including toughening criminal laws and bail conditions in cases of domestic assault, exploring restorative justice processes and addressing the high incarceration of Indigenous Canadians
- Developing a ***national housing strategy***, and growing and maintaining Canada's network of shelters and transition houses
- Taking action to ensure that ***workplaces are free from harassment and sexual violence*** (i.e., the public service, Parliament, the Canadian Armed Forces, the RCMP and other public safety portfolio agencies)
- Bringing forward a proposal regarding ***permanent residency for new spouses*** entering Canada
- Reviewing current ***gender- and culturally- sensitive training policies*** for federal front-line law enforcement officers

Other government commitments on broader social policy issues may also have an impact on addressing gender-based violence, including:

- Working to ***reduce the wage gap*** between men and women
- Introducing a ***Canadians with Disabilities Act***
- Establishing a ***National Framework on Early Learning and Child Care***

OUTCOMES:

The following **outcomes** will shape the development and implementation of the strategy:

<p>Coordinated and Collaborative</p>	<p>The federal government has a mechanism in place to coordinate actions, strengthen partnerships, and monitor and assess the collective impact of federal government actions aimed at eliminating gender-based violence²²</p>
<p>Comprehensive</p>	<p>Communities and organizations are supported to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Prevent violence from occurring in the first place, recognizing that research indicates that early prevention has health, social and economic benefits to Canadians across the lifespan.</i>²³ – <i>Support survivors, including through working in collaboration with provinces and territories</i> – <i>Promote rehabilitation and prevent re-offending</i> <p>Canadians are supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>A strong legal and justice system response</i>
<p>Evidence-based</p>	<p>Canadians are supported by policies, programs and initiatives that are based in evidence, recognize the root causes of GBV and reflect the unique experiences, needs and challenges of diverse groups</p>
<p>Accountable</p>	<p>Canadians receive regular information about what the federal government is doing to address and prevent GBV, including through regular monitoring and public reporting on the <i>federal strategy's</i> progress.</p>

PRINCIPLES:

Six principles will guide the development and implementation of the federal strategy.

1. Focus on Federal Scope

Strengthen federal collaboration and coordinate the federal government's approach to preventing and addressing gender-based violence

2. Emphasis on Prevention

Take action early to stop violence through early prevention

3. Embrace Diversity

Working from an intersectional feminist approach, recognizing how different structures and belief systems interact. This includes considering the needs of diverse populations, including those most at-risk of being victimized.

4. Respect Survivors

Recognizing survivors as experts on their own personal experiences. This includes supporting survivor self-determination and respecting survivors' rights, privacy, and knowledge

5. Be evidence-based

Anchor efforts in the best available knowledge and evidence

6. Value Partnerships

Commit to hearing from a diversity of voices, experiences and expertise, and to working collaboratively with and building on the work of provinces and territories and civil society to address and prevent gender-based violence

Through these guiding principles, and informed by your insights and perspectives, we can create a federal strategy that will bolster the work that is already being done and bring us one step closer to ending gender-based violence in Canada.

Annex A

Glossary

Harassment²⁴ is a form of violence and discrimination. It involves any unwanted physical or verbal behaviour that offends or humiliates you that persists over time. Sometimes serious one-time incidents can also be considered harassment. Harassment occurs when someone:

- makes unwelcome remarks or jokes about your race, religion, sex, age, disability or any one of the other 11 grounds of discrimination
- threatens or intimidates you
- makes unwelcome physical contact with you, such as touching, patting, pinching or punching, which can also be considered **assault**

Criminal harassment²⁵, also known as stalking, is a crime. It involves repeated conduct that makes someone fear for their safety or the safety of someone they care about. It can include:

- watching or following someone
- making threats that cause someone to fear for their safety
- making threats to someone's children, family, pets or friends that cause fear
- repeatedly calling emailing, texting or sending gifts after being asked to stop

Online violence²⁶ involves the use of communication technologies such as the Internet, social networking sites, websites, email, text messaging and instant messaging to repeatedly intimidate or harass others. It includes:

- Sending mean or threatening emails or text/instant messages
- Posting embarrassing photos of someone online
- Creating a website to make fun of others
- Pretending to be someone by using their name
- Tricking someone into revealing personal or embarrassing information and sending it to others

**Other forms of violence discussed in this document are defined on the Public Health Agency of Canada's website: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sfv-avf/info/fv-eng.php>

Annex B

Current Federal Departmental Roles in Preventing and Addressing Gender-Based Violence

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) provides federal funding for shelters for victims of family violence to provinces and territories (PTs) through bilateral agreements under the Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH). Under the IAH, PTs have the flexibility to design and deliver housing programs to respond to local needs and pressures. Initiatives include new construction, renovation, affordability assistance and independent living, including accommodations for victims of family violence. On-reserve, through the Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP), CMHC offers financial assistance for the repair, rehabilitation and improvement of existing shelters, and for the acquisition or construction of new shelters and second-stage housing for victims of domestic violence. In the coming months, the federal government through CMHC will work with provinces and territories and conduct consultations with Canadians, Indigenous and other communities, key stakeholders and housing experts to develop a National Housing Strategy. The National Housing Strategy will cover the entire housing continuum – from homelessness and shelters, to affordable rental housing and homeownership, and will consider new approaches to housing options for victims of domestic violence.

Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) provides correctional programs services and information to registered victims of family violence about the offender, if the sentence is for two or more years (that is, release dates, parole conditions, participation in programs, institutional transfers, and other information.) Information about available local services and about the offender's correctional plan and progress toward meeting the objectives of the plan may be provided upon a victim's request. CSC also addresses family violence issues through research, treatment programs and staff training. CSC's Restorative Opportunities program offers victim-offender mediation services to address the harm caused by the offence. The program is confidential and completely voluntary on the part of both parties.

The Department of National Defence promotes awareness of family violence issues, supports programming aimed at the stressors often associated with family violence and provides support, counselling and referral services for members and families who are victims of family violence.

The Department of Justice reviews, researches and reforms criminal and family legislation and policy. It funds community-based family violence and victims and survivors of crime projects; and provides public legal education and information (PLEI) support on family violence and

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victims and survivors of crime issues. With respect to the family justice system, Justice Canada also develops PLEI, provides funding to the PTs for family justice services, as well as to non-governmental organizations for PLEI.

Employment and Social Development Canada contributes to addressing violence through its mission to build a stronger, more competitive Canada, to support Canadians in making choices that help them live productive and rewarding lives and to improve Canadians' quality of life. To achieve this, more than 95 percent of the Department's expenditures go directly to benefit Canadians in one way or another. ESDC helps Canadians in all stages of their lives—from children to seniors—as well as Canadians with distinct needs such as Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, homeless people and recent immigrants.

Health Canada, through its First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) addresses risk factors linked to family violence on-reserve and in Inuit communities by supporting community-based health promotion and prevention programs. The Health Portfolio's Sex and Gender Based Analysis (SGBA) Policy also includes a commitment to use SGBA to promote similar health benefits/outcomes for women, men, boys and girls in Canada, including those related to family violence.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada promotes awareness and prevention of family violence issues through integration, citizenship, immigration policies and programs aimed at fostering positive outcomes for newcomers and their families. Violence prevention supports offered by service provider organizations are embedded within the broader Settlement Program and include activities to mitigate the risks of exposure to gender-based violence by strengthening knowledge of Canadian laws, social cohesion and community connections. These services are provided both pre- and post-arrival, through online resources, publications, in-person services, as well as through referrals to available community supports. Services may include: assisting clients in developing safety plans and building confidence, obtaining medical and social services and navigating the legal system. Other prevention activities include comprehensive needs assessments, counseling services and referrals for newcomers in abusive situations. For example, women's-only language classes and support groups provide a safe and open space for newcomer women and girls. IRCC also offers support services, such as child care and transportation, to facilitate access to settlement services for vulnerable groups. Many clients for these services are often women who would not otherwise be able to benefit from settlement programming.

Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada provides funding to assist First Nations in: providing access to family violence shelter services and prevention activities to women, children and families ordinarily resident on-reserve; becoming more self-sufficient; providing prevention

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supports that allow individuals and families to better care for their children; and supporting greater participation in the labour market.

Public Health Agency of Canada coordinates the federal Family Violence Initiative (FVI) and hosts the Stop Family Violence web pages. The Agency is supporting family violence prevention through its maternal-child health programs for vulnerable populations. These programs focus on positive parenting, parental involvement, attachment, resilience and healthy relationships. The programs serve as important points of access where women living in situations of abuse and violence may be referred to more specialized intervention services. The Agency also conducts surveillance on child maltreatment (including some aspects of intimate partner violence) on and off reserve through the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect. In addition, the Agency supports community-based programs that promote the health of survivors of family violence, and projects that strengthen public health capacity to address family violence.

Public Safety Canada keeps Canadians safe from a range of risks such as natural disasters, crime and terrorism. Public Safety Canada's National Crime Prevention Strategy provides national leadership on effective and cost-effective ways to prevent and reduce crime among at-risk populations and vulnerable communities by intervening to mitigate the underlying factors (that is, known risk factors, that put individuals at risk of offending). Public Safety also supports Indigenous communities in their efforts to tackle safety issues through community-based solutions. Through the Aboriginal Community Safety Planning Initiative, Indigenous communities develop community capacity and strategic responses to safety issues, including the safety needs of Indigenous women and girls.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) provides a range of national and locally tailored programs and initiatives to address gender-based violence and/or harassment. The RCMP's activities addressing gender-based violence correspond to the national police service's multifaceted mandate and include crime prevention activities, operational and investigative initiatives, public awareness and training, as well as internal training initiatives.

Service Canada, through the Confidential Service for Victims of Abuse (CSVA), works with provincial and territorial partners to increase personal safety for Canadians who are victims of intimate or familial violence or are at risk of serious injury or death.

Statistics Canada works to improve the availability of national level data on the nature and extent of family violence. Data from the justice and victims' services sectors, as well as data collected from the Canadian population, help to capture changes over time in the nature and extent of family violence, its long term impacts, and outcomes in court cases involving incidents of family violence. In addition, Statistics Canada makes various data sets available through their

network of Research Data Centres (RDC), located on university campuses across the country. These Centres provide researchers with access to microdata from population and household surveys, in a secure setting compliant with the Statistics Act, thereby increasing the research capacity related to family violence.

Status of Women Canada promotes the full participation of women in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada. It advances gender equality for women and removes barriers to women's participation in society by encouraging women's leadership and democratic participation, increasing women's economic security and prosperity and working to end violence against women and girls. Status of Women Canada is responsible for providing strategic policy advice, supporting gender-based analysis, administering the Women's Program, and promoting Commemorative Dates relating to women in Canada.

Endnotes

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