

#SHECOVERY PROJECT FACT SHEET



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



Results:

- Women were more likely to work in fields where COVID-19 exposure was higher and fields that had layoffs, such as hospitality, retail, education, healthcare, and social assistance.
 - 1.5 million Canadian women lost their jobs in the first two months of the pandemic
- IPV increased over the pandemic as victims were forced to stay at home with their abusers in stressful circumstances with fewer opportunities to leave the home
 - 118 girls and women were killed in 2019. In 2020, that number went up to 160. In the first six months of 2021, 92 women were killed by their intimate partner.
- Survivors of IPV lacked privacy from their partners and were isolated from other social support
- Women were also more financially controlled and dependent on their abusers as many struggled with financial difficulties
 - It has been documented that there are increases in domestic violence during times of economic downturn due to relationship and financial hardship during these times[1]
- Shelters, clinics, and other organizations for victims of GBV were also less accessible during the pandemic, especially in rural and remote areas
- Barriers to accessing support services included:
 - Fears about contracting COVID-19 by accessing services, especially in a hospital
 - COVID-19 protocols being reminiscent of past controlling situations
 - Preoccupation with other stressors, such as meeting basic needs
 - Abusive partners preventing women from accessing services
 - Lack of access to technology or lack of privacy in accessing services from home
 - Lack of availability/space, especially in women's shelters
- Barriers from the perspective of care providers during the pandemic:
 - Separating home and work life while working from home
 - Lack of funding for services, and some never recovered
 - Lack of funding to keep up with new forms of GBV
- Indigenous, racialized, and newcomer women were more likely to experience violence

- 1 in 5 Indigenous women reports being the victim of physical or psychological violence, despite this, there is still a lack of services made for and by Indigenous communities
- Racialized women were more likely to be working in service industries, earning less than non-racialized women, and also reported high levels of discrimination
- Financial difficulties were more common for racialized and newcomer women, putting them at greater risk of experiencing GBV due to isolation and unemployment
- Increased violence in the home was predictive of increased mental health symptoms in youth[2]
- The pandemic highlighted many instances of elder abuse, and in particular, this affected older women
 - Despite this, older adults' voices tend to be invisible
 - It is especially difficult for senior women to leave an abusive relationship, and this worsened during the pandemic, which disproportionately impacted seniors[3]
 - According to Statistics Canada, the rate of violent victimization is not statistically different among senior men and women, but disabled senior women were at significantly greater risk of being victimized compared to senior, disabled men[4]
- However, senior women are at much greater risk of being victims of IPV than senior men
- Technology has facilitated greater access and flexibility in making appointments, allowing survivors to stay connected and feel more at ease in discussing difficult topics
- However, many victims experienced a lack of access to technology, which impacted their ability to access domestic or sexual violence support services
 - This is especially the case for rural areas and Indigenous communities
- Technology has also facilitated GBV through online stalking, harassment, sexual abuse, and harassment
 - A type of harassment called Zoom bombing emerged, in which offensive and shocking content was posted to disrupt virtual meetings. A study found that of these types of attacks, 43% were misogynistic and were most often directed at female teachers' virtual classrooms
- Barriers relating to online services included:
 - Some clients that had hearing impairments were not able to access online services
 - Sometimes, online services are less effective in that non-verbal cues can be missed
 - Lack of privacy in the home
 - Abusers controlling access to technology as a form of coercive control
 - Financial difficulties led to limits on data or internet usage
- Positive effects of providing services online:
 - Helped victims to stay connected and combat feelings of loneliness
 - Greater flexibility in setting appointments
 - Transportation and childcare barriers to accessing services were no longer a concern
 - Quieter work environment
 - Clients felt more at ease and comfortable at home
 - Able to reach clients in wider geographic areas

Best Practices

- Enhance accessibility to online services and evaluate the effectiveness of online counselling.
- Adopt a hybrid approach with both in-person and online services
- Ensure equitable access for all, including culturally sensitive services for newcomers and other marginalized communities
 - Increase access to services made by and for Indigenous peoples
- Promote inclusive research practices that involve diverse voices and perspectives
 - Ensure survivors and their lived experiences inform research processes
- Promote digital safety and awareness to protect victims of GBV from online harassment, stalking and other forms of technology-facilitated violence
 - Educate service providers on the latest technologies used to facilitate GBV and encourage ongoing research
- Encourage the formation of collaborative partnerships between GBV service organizations so that survivors have cohesive support
- Advocate for the establishment of long-term support systems for survivors beyond immediate crisis intervention, such as mentorship and peer support programs
- Develop and implement a crisis response plan that addresses the escalation of GBV in emergency and pandemic situations
- Engage in legal and policy advocacy to strengthen legal frameworks and policies related to GBV prevention, protection, and survivor support

“We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our community agencies, partners, and clients for their unwavering support and invaluable advice throughout this project. We also express our deep appreciation to Women and Gender Equality Canada for their generous funding, which has enabled us to make a meaningful impact in our community.”

[1] <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/as-possible-recession-looms-advocate-warn-domestic-violence-could-increase-1.6230646> ; <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13524-016-0462-1>

[2] <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2022-37091-001>

[3] <https://www.anovafuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Full-Report.pdf>

[4] <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00011-eng.htm>