

# BACKGROUND: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IS AN EPIDEMIC

## WHAT IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is any act of violence centred on a person's gender, gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender. It can include emotional, physical, financial and sexual violence, and its impacts can span generations. (Government of Canada)

GBV goes beyond intimate partner violence and includes all forms of gendered violence, both within and outside of intimate relationships. GBV also includes all forms of sexual violence, sexual harassment and online gendered harassment.

## WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Anyone can experience GBV, but women, girls and gender diverse people are at far greater risk. Those who face additional barriers and discrimination, including Indigenous women, unhoused women and Two-Spirit and trans people are disproportionately impacted.

Men are most frequently the perpetrators of GBV.

## WHY ARE WE ADVOCATING FOR MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA TO DECLARE GBV AN EPIDEMIC?

Acknowledging GBV as a public health issue of epidemic proportions is a critical step in recognizing its severity and coordinating efforts to address its root causes. At least one woman or girl is killed every two days across Canada and in BC, nearly 30 percent of women have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence.

Research shows that declaring an epidemic results in increased public awareness, better data collection and research, increased diagnosis and prevention, and long-term behavioural changes.

Despite various initiatives aimed at addressing this crisis, the prevalence and severity of GBV remain alarmingly high. In response, YWCA Metro Vancouver, in collaboration with a coalition of anti-violence organizations, academic experts, business leaders, community advocates and educators, is launching an initiative to declare GBV an epidemic in BC.



**DECLARING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AS AN EPIDEMIC IS NOT MERELY A SYMBOLIC ACT,** it's a critical step toward mobilizing a comprehensive and coordinated effort to address its root cause, support survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. — *(CityNews Toronto, quoting a victim's mother)*

## HOW PERVASIVE IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)?

- Between 2018 and 2022, 850 women and girls were killed across Canada. That means at least one woman or girl was killed every two days. However, femicide is not included in the Canadian Criminal Code (Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability)
- 29.8% of women in British Columbia report experiencing physical or sexual assault from an intimate partner since the age of 15 (Statistics Canada 2023)
- One in five Canadian women, girls and gender-diverse people report experiencing online hate and harassment (Canadian Women's Foundation). This is a growing issue and can include non-consensual sharing of intimate images, cyberstalking, online harassment and insults
- Women living in Canada are almost four times more likely than men to have been sexually assaulted at least once since the age of 15, according to self-reported data (Government of Canada)
- According to research conducted by A. S. Ivany and D. Schminkey<sup>1</sup>, as many as 92 percent of women who have experienced intimate partner violence demonstrate signs and symptoms of traumatic brain injury
- Financial impacts of GBV can include an inability to work and loss of wages, lengthy and costly court battles, loss of housing and property and counselling and health care costs (Province of BC)

1. A. S. Ivany and D. Schminkey, "Intimate partner violence and traumatic brain injury: State of the science and next steps," *Fam. Community Heal.*, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 129–137, 2016

## WE ARE ASKING GOVERNMENT TO

1. Declare GBV an epidemic
2. Instruct the BC Coroner to conduct a review of deaths by GBV
3. Follow a public health approach to address GBV, focusing on prevention and support for survivors
4. Scale up investments in housing to support women, children and gender-diverse people who are escaping intimate partner violence



In collaboration with 40+ non-profits and community advocates

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Shauna Shortt** | [sshortt@ywcavan.org](mailto:sshortt@ywcavan.org) | 604 613 2485  
Senior Manager of Advocacy and Government Relations  
YWCA Metro Vancouver