

Student Handout:

Identifying and Addressing forms of Gender-Based Violence

What is gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a term that encompasses a range of behaviours and actions that cause harm, control, or coerce someone based on their gender, gender identity, or perceived gender.

Who is affected?

While anyone can experience GBV, it disproportionately affects women and girls, and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. In Canada, women from Indigenous communities, racialized women, women with disabilities, and people from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community are more likely to experience GBV.

While there have been many attempts to reduce the inequities that contribute to gender-based violence in Canada, it is still a significant issue today. The table below describes different forms of GBV and some of the laws, policies, and programs in Canada meant to address gender-based violence.

Form of GBV	Definition	Example	Related Policies, Laws and Programs
Physical Violence	Using physical force against someone that can cause harm or injury.	A partner hitting their spouse during an argument.	<i>Criminal Code of Canada:</i> Physical assault, including domestic violence, is a criminal offense under various sections of the Criminal Code. <i>Protection Orders:</i> Individuals experiencing domestic violence can apply for protective orders that legally prevent the perpetrator from contacting or approaching them. <i>Victim Services Programs:</i> Provincial and territorial victim services provide support, such as counseling, emergency shelters and assistance getting protection orders.
Sexual Violence	Non-consensual sexual acts including sexual assault, unwanted sexual contact, or sexual coercion.	Unwanted sexual contact at a party or school.	<i>Criminal Code of Canada:</i> Sexual assault is explicitly criminalized, covering a wide range of behaviours. <i>Canadian Victims Bill of Rights (CVBR):</i> Provides victims of sexual violence with the right to information, protection, participation, and restitution within the justice system. <i>Sexual Assault Crisis Centers:</i> Provide immediate support, counseling, and medical assistance to survivors of sexual violence. <i>Federal Funding for Victims of Crime:</i> Supports initiatives designed to help survivors access justice and therapeutic services.
Psychological/Emotional Violence	Behaviours that cause emotional pain or distress such as threats, manipulation, or isolating someone from friends or family.	Threatening to harm oneself if the other person tries to leave the relationship.	<i>Family Violence Initiative:</i> A federal initiative that supports programs addressing the emotional and psychological aspects of intimate partner violence. <i>Family Resource Centers:</i> Provide counseling and support services to help individuals cope with and escape from emotionally abusive relationships. <i>Crisis Hotlines:</i> Offer immediate psychological support for individuals experiencing emotional or psychological violence

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Economic Violence	Controlling someone's financial resources or economic opportunities to make them dependent or powerless.	Preventing a partner from accessing money or working to keep them dependent.	<i>Income Assistance Programs:</i> Available to survivors leaving abusive situations, providing financial support and access to housing. <i>Women's Shelters and Transition Houses:</i> Offer economic resources, employment counseling, and support to help survivors gain independence.
Cultural/Spiritual Violence	Using cultural or spiritual beliefs to harm, control, or manipulate someone based on their gender.	Using cultural or spiritual practices to justify restricting a person's freedoms, such as accessing education or leaving an abusive relationship.	<i>Charter of Rights and Freedoms:</i> Protects individuals' rights to practice their religion or culture without interference, making discriminatory or harmful acts based on cultural/spiritual beliefs illegal. <i>National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG):</i> Addresses systemic cultural violence against Indigenous women and girls, recommending cultural safety training and Indigenous-led solutions.
Harassment and Stalking	Unwanted repeated attention or actions that make someone feel unsafe, like following them or sending threatening messages.	An ex-partner repeatedly showing up uninvited at someone's home or workplace.	<i>Criminal Code of Canada:</i> stalking and behaviors that cause fear or intimidation, both in person and online, are crimes under the Code. <i>Public Awareness Campaigns:</i> Initiatives like "It's Not Just" by the Department for Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) raise awareness about digital harassment and the legal consequences. <i>Cyber Tipline and Cyber Safety Resources:</i> Offered by organizations such as the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, these resources provide reporting mechanisms and support for victims of online harassment.
Human Trafficking	Forcing someone into sex work through threats, force, or coercion.	Someone being forced into sex work as a result of coercion or violence.	<i>Criminal Code of Canada:</i> Human trafficking is explicitly criminalized under sections that prohibit exploitation through coercion, force, or deception. <i>National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking:</i> Launched by the Canadian government, this strategy focuses on prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership efforts to tackle human trafficking.
Digital/Online Violence	Acts of violence that occur through digital platforms including social media, messaging apps, or other online spaces.	Sharing intimate images of someone without their consent, or sending threatening messages through social media.	<i>Criminal Code of Canada:</i> Criminalizes the sharing of intimate images without the consent of the person depicted. Those found guilty can face imprisonment and fines. <i>Federal Cybercrime Strategy:</i> Developed by the RCMP, this strategy targets digital crimes, including harassment and image-based abuse, to protect victims and prosecute offenders.