

Research shows that supportive networks like these help bridge crucial gaps in service provision and lead to positive outcomes for the community. The role of community organizations is key here because the familiarity of these organizations with ACB communities helps build comfort and rapport between the providers and receivers of support.

The more service providers engage with immigrant cultures and knowledge bases, the more strategies we can innovate to make services more culturally compatible and accessible to immigrant survivors. Existing research suggests that linguistic compatibility with non-English speaking groups is a good starting point.

Another effective method is the use of online environments for programming, which can create safe spaces and offer anonymity, allowing participants to open up to stigmatized topics. Acknowledging unique immigrant circumstances also implies paying attention to other tangible, logistical considerations such as the location of support services, on-site childcare, follow-ups, and increasing accessibility to resource materials. Culture-specific transition homes can ease the adjustment process for survivors wishing to leave. The time has come to look beyond our current approaches and integrate multiple strategies and interventions to address IPV. Implementing culturally tailored programs for immigrant peoples can increase awareness of IPV, build trust among survivors, and increase overall access to much-needed support.

³ Okeke-Ihejirika, P., Salami, B., & Karimi, A. (2019). African immigrant women's transition and integration into Canadian society: expectations, stressors, and tensions. *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 26(4), 581-601. <https://doi-org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1553852>

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Culturally and Contextually Adaptive Support & Prevention

Intimate Partner Violence



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

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It is important to remember that diverse communities view, understand, and cope with Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in different ways. This pamphlet will explore the unique cultural considerations of African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), also called domestic violence or spousal violence, is a pattern of abusive behaviors within an intimate or romantic relationship. One partner uses abusive behaviours or tactics to control or gain power over their partner. We often think of violence as physical in nature, but IPV can also be sexual, financial, and emotional. IPV does not exist in vacuum, but is a consequence of unhealthy gender relations shaped by factors within and outside of the relationship.

Most victim-survivors of IPV often turn to informal sources of support over formal ones and less than 22% of victim-survivors will report to the police.¹ Victim-survivors belonging to marginalized communities are even less likely to seek formal supports due to a shortage of culturally-informed services, lack of trust in the legal system and law enforcement. As such many women fear experiencing discrimination or cultural insensitivity from those working within formal support systems. Developing culturally appropriate techniques involves understanding that communities perceive, experience, and cope with IPV in various ways. Programs and services must address common experiences of victim-survivors of IPV, while also being responsive to specific problems faced by ACB communities.²

Unique immigrant factors

IPV exists in all cultures and societies. However, there are several contributing

factors that are unique to ACB communities, especially those who have immigrated to Canada. However, ACB communities are not a monolith and have different cultural values and factors, which should be considered in IPV service provision. Very often, these considerations are not treated with discretion or given enough importance by service providers. Such dismissive attitudes, combined with survivors' self-blame and fear of being stigmatized by their community, discourage them from placing their trust in external sources of support.

Other unique factors include post-migration stress, social isolation, changes in socioeconomic status and social networks, English-language fluency, deskilling, shifting gender relations, etc. Many immigrants experience deskilling (accepting jobs that they are overqualified for) and underemployment (unwillingly working low-paying jobs or only part-time because they cannot get full-time jobs that use their skills)³. This especially impacts women, causing financial dependence, which decreases the likelihood that they will seek formal support.

Additionally, immigrant women have less power, fewer resources, and fear deportation or a loss of immigration status if they seek formal support.

Racism and racialized experiences also shape the immigrant and broader ACB communities' experiences in the West. IPV is a social and political issue rooted not just in patriarchy, but equally in the structural violence that people of colour encounter every day. Often, these factors can lead to stress that might manifest as conflict within the home.

¹ Statistics Canada (2011). Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile: 2009 GSS Victimization Survey, no. 86-224-X. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Ministry of Industry, 2011.

²"ACB" African, Caribbean, and Black

Culturally Adaptive Services

Culturally adaptive services are accessible services that recognize and are shaped by the experiences and cultural considerations of immigrants themselves. These services recognize the uniqueness of diverse individuals and communities and are adapted to meet the requirements of each.

Returning agency and empowerment

Conventional service provision often uses a top-down approach that dismisses cultural and embodied knowledge systems. It views immigrant cultures through a pathological lens and assumes that immigrant survivors of IPV need to be "rescued" from the dangers of their cultural environment. An important step towards cultural competency involves empowering survivors from ACB communities by returning agency to them, rather than taking more of it away. One way to do this is to actively incorporate their unique solutions to IPV, recognise them as legitimate strategies, and work towards broadening and diversifying the definition of "coping". By understanding and integrating immigrant knowledge bases into service provision, we can draw on collectivism, community strength, and resilience to improve the quality of interventions.

Collaborative approaches

ACB cultures are often collectivist and respond very well to group-oriented approaches. An effective way of channeling this ideology is by recognizing the potential of community partnerships and networking. Increasing collaboration between service providers, researchers, survivors, and community members and leaders, makes support more streamlined and accessible.