

when service providers impose solutions that do not address their needs and priorities.

Gender: We must open the conversation to men and understand their role and capacity in preventing IPV. Spaces should be created for men to express and explore their perspectives, which can be incorporated into intervention strategies. Service providers must also make efforts to understand how diverse genders and sexualities experience IPV differently, enabling us to tailor services appropriately.

Service Provision: Research shows that collaborations between researchers, service agencies, and community organizations helped increase the reach of programs, establish effective relationships, and bridge service gaps. Programs that collaborate with community organizations are more successful in establishing rapport with survivors. Online program delivery can encourage participation by promising anonymity and creating safe spaces where stigmas can be broken.

For more information on this project please visit our website:

<https://africacentre.ca/enhancing-gender-equity/>

or

<https://pran-network.ca/knowledge-mobilization/tools/>

For more information on our programs or to get involved please contact us via email at gender.equity@africacentre.ca

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What Role Do Systems Play?

Intimate Partner Violence



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada

As service providers, spiritual, religious, or other community leaders, we become the points of support and guidance when survivors share their experiences of IPV. The aid we provide must be informed by the broader systemic factors that shape IPV and prevent survivors from seeking or receiving aid. These factors may be economic, political, legal, cultural, racial, gender-related, etc.

Financial and Economic Factors

Immigrants to Canada often encounter challenges in finding secure employment. This can be a result of foreign credentials not being recognized or even explicit discrimination by employers on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, or race. The frustration accompanying these experiences can contribute to violence at home. Immigrant women are even more likely to experience deskilling, unemployment, and underemployment. This leaves them vulnerable to exploitation by their partners and prevents them from seeking help out of fear of losing their financial support.

Law and Policy

For many survivors —especially women— mandatory charging has harmful implications if their finances or immigration status is dependent on their partner. Further, the rapid removal response might not align with cultural values and the desire to keep families together, preventing survivors from seeking help. Many immigrants also deeply fear losing their children to the social system by reporting violence within the household. Racial discrimination by the police and past negative experiences with law enforcement compound their fear and apprehension of the law.

Services and Barriers to Access

Immigrant survivors rely on their communities for a sense of belonging and cannot risk being alienated, which makes confidentiality a big concern. Other challenges include linguistic barriers (particularly the inability to translate sexual terms), victim blaming, isolated locations of services, and a lack of on-site childcare. A lack of resource materials and follow-ups, as well as insufficient mental health interventions for perpetrators, also undermine long-term effectiveness.

Cultural and Racial Factors

Racial (micro)aggressions and resulting stress can become triggers for IPV. Agents offering aid for survivors can themselves discriminate, especially when they disregard diverse cultural considerations or view immigrant cultures as inherently violent. Immigrant survivors often avoid reporting violence for fear of reinforcing such stereotypes.

Formal services often use individualistic approaches, which do not align with the community-oriented mindsets of many immigrant groups or cultures that value “togetherness”. However, the community can perpetuate the problem, especially when family, friends, and religious leaders prioritize preserving the marriage.

Gender - A Focus on Men

Gender roles vary across cultures. Often, on immigrating to Canada, couples face new roles and balances of power within the household. Some view Canadian culture as more supportive of women than men. Conflicts often arise when men perceive their power or authority as threatened by the system, which becomes a precursor for IPV. Intervention strategies have mainly been

dedicated to women. However, surveys reveal that most men are actually willing to participate in IPV prevention programs and believe they can effectively contribute to healthy relationships at home. By failing to also focus on men, their needs, and their capacities, we fail to address a crucial link in the process of long-term IPV prevention.

WHAT WE CAN DO

Cultural competence: Take the time to understand the broader experiences of immigrant life and proactively make support accessible for non-English-speaking groups. It is also crucial to incorporate existing immigrant knowledge bases in the provision of services— a relationship of mutual learning (as opposed to a top-down one) can increase the scope for conversation, spread greater awareness of IPV, and improve the self-esteem of survivors. Cultural competence also involves acknowledging systemic barriers, such as institutionalized racism, stereotypes, microaggressions, and other racialized experiences that uniquely influence and contribute to IPV in certain communities. Finally, service providers must recognise that all immigrant experiences are not homogenous; what works for one community might not work for another!

Agency: Immigrant women have diverse and often creative approaches to experiences of IPV. Service providers and policymakers must acknowledge these as legitimate strategies. Immigrant survivors are far more successful in removing themselves from situations of violence when they are empowered in their decision-making than