

Policy Brief

2SLGBTQ+ Intimate Partner Violence in the Prairie Provinces

Executive Summary

A great deal of research on intimate partner violence (IPV) exists. However, few studies focus on experiences of IPV in 2SLGBTQ+ communities. Emerging research has found that 2SLGBTQ+ communities in the Prairie provinces experience unique and additional forms of abuse in intimate relationships, as well as barriers to seeking help. Specialized responses from policy and decision-makers are required in order to address the issue.

Introduction

IPV refers to harm caused by an intimate partner through acts of physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, financial abuse, religious or spiritual abuse, and coercive control. Most research on the subject focuses on the experiences of women in heterosexual relationships, with these perspectives shaping popular understandings of IPV and policy responses. While focusing on the experiences of heterosexual women is indeed important, this emphasis has led to a lack of understanding regarding other experiences of IPV, such as those of 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

To fill this information gap, researchers at RESOLVE and community partners, Rainbow Resource Centre (Manitoba), OUT Saskatoon (Saskatchewan), and Sagesse (Alberta) conducted a study *Examining the Nature & Context of IPV in 2SLGBTQ+ Communities* from July of 2020 to August of 2022. The goal was to provide a clear picture of IPV in 2SLGBTQ+ communities and to identify barriers to seeking help for 2SLGBTQ+ survivors in the Prairie provinces. This brief shares findings from the research with the aim of informing and enhancing policy responses to 2SLGBTQ+ IPV.

Research Overview

Research Approach

The research study addressed the following questions:

1. How is IPV experienced by members of 2SLGBTQ+ communities?
2. What are the perceptions of IPV within 2SLGBTQ+ communities?
3. What are the help-seeking experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ persons?
4. What intervention services and support programs are available to 2SLGBTQ+ survivors of IPV?
5. What are the recommendations for addressing 2SLGBTQ+ survivors of IPV and for improving the service response for 2SLGBTQ+ survivors?

To address these questions, RESOLVE researchers gathered multiple sources of data. First, a **literature review** was conducted to examine previous data on the subject of 2SLGBTQ+ IPV. Next, an **environmental scan** was conducted to gather available services and supports for 2SLGBTQ+ survivors in the Prairie provinces. Finally, an **online survivor survey** was administered to 2SLGBTQ+ survivors and **in-depth interviews** were conducted with 2SLGBTQ+ survivors and service providers throughout the Prairies.

Results

2SLGBTQ+ survivors experienced unique and additional types of abuse

2SLGBTQ+ survivors reported experiencing the same types of abuse as heterosexual survivors, such as physical, sexual, or financial abuse. However, 2SLGBTQ+ survivors also reported unique and additional types of abuse specific to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, such as threats to “out” survivors publicly if they leave the relationship.

For study details,
access the final
report here



Intersectional factors impacted experiences of abuse and injury

Intersectional identities impacted experiences of abuse and injury in 2SLGBTQ+ communities in various ways, with women or non-binary individuals reporting more emotional injuries than men and those with mental or physical disabilities experiencing high rates of physical injury.

Only half of 2SLGBTQ+ survivors reported their experiences with abuse to formal support services

Data from the online survivor survey revealed that only 54% of 2SLGBTQ+ survivors reported the IPV they experienced to a formal support service. The majority of those that reported their experiences did so to a counsellor, psychologist, or support worker.

Experiences with police and the justice system were overwhelmingly negative

Survivors detailed many negative experiences with police and the justice system, which were largely rooted in the past criminalization of 2SLGBTQ+ identities. Although these laws are no longer in effect, many noted that harmful police practices exist, including mocking and belittling, misgendering, and not taking 2SLGBTQ+ IPV seriously.

2SLGBTQ+ communities have limited avenues for support

2SLGBTQ+ survivors faced both a lack of resources and services specific to 2SLGBTQ+ communities and barriers to accessing services, such as fears of how their gender identity would be perceived or 2SLGBTQ+ discrimination.

Recommendations

Research participants provided recommendations to improve policy responses toward 2SLGBTQ+ IPV:

- **Involve 2SLGBTQ+ communities in decision-making**
 - Including 2SLGBTQ+ communities in the decision-making process can ensure that policies reflect the needs of 2SLGBTQ+ survivors.
- **Utilize an intersectional approach to policy-making**
 - Those who experience multiple forms of vulnerability are more likely to experience IPV, as well as barriers to accessing IPV supports. Policy responses should utilize an intersectional approach to reflect the needs of these populations.
- **Develop and expand resources and services**
 - Resources and services need to be developed and expanded upon to serve the unique needs of 2SLGBTQ+ populations, including mental health services, anonymous or online supports, 2SLGBTQ+ peer support programs, and services for diverse populations.
- **Increase education and awareness**
 - Public awareness and education campaigns are powerful tools in bringing the issue of 2SLGBTQ+ IPV to the forefront and influencing change.
- **Improve police and justice system responses**
 - Police and justice system responses to 2SLGBTQ+ IPV must make survivors feel safe and respected. This includes respecting 2SLGBTQ+ identities and/or pronouns, taking 2SLGBTQ+ IPV seriously, and holding officers accountable for not adequately responding to 2SLGBTQ+ IPV.
- **Allocate funding to 2SLGBTQ+ organizations and initiatives**
 - Many of the aforementioned recommendations cannot be realized without funding. Prioritizing funding for 2SLGBTQ+ resources, services, and initiatives is essential to addressing the issue.

Lessons and Insights for Policy Makers

Policy and decision-makers play an important role in the response to IPV. The approaches adopted by those with decision-making authority can largely shape the help-seeking experiences of survivors, including the resources and service available and justice system responses to the issue. The results of this research underscore that there is ***no “one size fits all” approach to addressing and responding to IPV, and that specific measures need to be implemented to serve the unique needs of survivors in 2SLGBTQ+ communities.*** Traditional responses tailored to the experiences of heterosexual women do not currently meet the needs of 2SLGBTQ+ survivors and must be adapted to their realities of violence and abuse.

**Access
literature
review here**