

Practice 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 unique and additional barriers to seeking help. Changes in service provision are required in order to assist survivors of IPV in these communities.

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 existing research on the subject focuses on the experiences of women in heterosexual relationships, with these perspectives shaping popular understandings of IPV and available resources and services. While focusing on the experiences of heterosexual women is important, this emphasis has led to a lack of understanding regarding other experiences of IPV, such as those in 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 in the Prairie provinces. This brief shares findings from the research project with the aim of informing and enhancing service provision for 2SLGBTQ+ survivors of 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**

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 did report their experiences did so to a counsellor, psychologist, or support worker.

2SLGBTQ+ help-seeking patterns differed from heterosexual help-seeking patterns

Service providers stated that 2SLGBTQ+ survivors did not access formal support services as readily as heterosexual survivors, and that they were most likely to seek help from a formal support service after a crisis event, such as experiencing severe abuse or grave danger.

2SLGBTQ+ survivors reported negative experiences with formal support services

Many 2SLGBTQ+ survivors reported negative experiences with formal support services. These negative experiences were particularly pronounced for police or RCMP, with many describing poor conduct from officers such as belittling, misgendering, and even abuse.

2SLGBTQ+ survivors faced unique and additional barriers to seeking help

2SLGBTQ+ survivors cited barriers to seeking help that are commonly expressed by heterosexual survivors, such as affordability or the COVID-19 pandemic. However, 2SLGBTQ+ survivors also faced additional barriers due to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, such as a lack of services designed for 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

Recommendations for Service Providers

Research participants provided the following recommendations to improve service provision for 2SLGBTQ+ survivors:

- **Establish safe and inclusive spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ communities**
 - Implementing anti-discriminatory and affirmative care practices can help ensure services are safe and inclusive for 2SLGBTQ+ survivors. This includes asking for and properly using pronouns, using inclusive language, understanding queer identities and relationships, and listening to survivors.
- **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.
- **Address barriers for marginalized communities accessing resources and services**
 - Survivors of diverse gender identities, sexual orientations, ethno-cultural backgrounds, and abilities faced distinct barriers to accessing resources and services. Anticipating and addressing barriers for marginalized groups can help ensure that all survivors can access the help they need.
- **2SLGBTQ+ representation in service provision**
 - Having service providers who identify as part of 2SLGBTQ+ communities can increase comfortability with supports and better serve the distinct needs of 2SLGBTQ+ survivors.
- **Increase education and awareness**
 - Public awareness and education campaigns are powerful tools in bringing the issue of 2SLGBTQ+ IPV to the forefront and ensuring that individuals have the tools to identify abuse and seek help.

Implications for Service Providers

Service providers play an integral role in addressing the many and complex needs of IPV survivors. However, resources and services are not easily accessed by many in 2SLGBTQ+ communities. There are steps that organizations and individual service providers can take to ensure that 2SLGBTQ+ communities have equitable access to services and that they feel safe and comfortable in these spaces. Adapting service provision to fit the unique needs of 2SLGBTQ+ communities is essential to ensuring that all survivors of IPV can access the help that they need.

**Access study
literature
review here**