



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: RISKS AND SAFETY PLANNING

The Bottom Line

Young gender diverse people are most at risk for pre-existing and new forms of gender-based violence. It is important for service providers to increase outreach, share information about risks and potential manipulation tactics, and develop safety plans for gender diverse individuals.

Young women, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit people (ages 15-24) are more likely to experience gender-based violence than any other age group. Females, people of colour, Indigenous peoples, newcomer communities, single parents, non-binary individuals, and children are experiencing the largest increase of pre-existing and new forms of gender-based violence.

In a study conducted by Statistics Canada, almost 50% of people aged 15-24 reported that COVID-19 put them in a place where they are unable to meet financial needs. Women aged 15-24 were more likely to be very or extremely anxious about violence occurring in the home during COVID-19, and this will have long-term impacts.

Impacts of Gender-Based Violence

Among other things, there has recently been increases in cyber violence, sexual abuse, racism, domestic violence, and the severity of intimate partner violence. COVID-19 lead to a significant increase in undetected gender-based violence, but so too do other factors such as school summer holidays.

Abusive people may also be using threats and trauma-bonding to keep women or children from disclosing abuse. Young girls and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to these manipulation tactics from their abusive partner or caregiver. This leads to self-blaming, downplaying, and justifying the abuse.

Women and youth are most likely to have jobs in the essential service industry and the health care industry. This puts them at greater risk of gender-based violence from strangers and the potential for job loss creates financial insecurity. This may lead to needing to move in with harmful individuals; face sexual exploitation in exchange for rent, substances, or other resources; or risk becoming houseless.

Possible Responses

- Service providers should keep young people informed of the risks associated with isolation and cyber-access, such as threats, trauma-bonding, and online sexual exploitation.
- More frequent contact may need to be made with groups that have historically been more vulnerable to gender-based violence. Risk assessments may need to continuously occur so support needs can be appropriately met.
- Service providers may need to assist in developing a safety plan should there be a need to flee a violent situation. For detailed information on safety planning, [Saskatchewan's Domestic Violence Safety Planning Guide](#) may be a beneficial resource. Depending on the situation, a safety plan may include:
 - creating and sharing a safe word or signal with a friend, family member, or service provider with the intent that typing or saying this word via text message, phone call, or video chat will imply a need for immediate help;
 - communicating with others on a daily basis with the intent that if communication does not occur one day, trusted people will know to further investigate safety;
 - making note of safe places to escape, such as unlocking a window in the basement; and,
 - memorizing the name, number, or location of an involved case worker and/or local crisis shelter should emergency assistance be required.

For original sources and documents, please visit: www.childtraumaresearch.ca

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