



City of Hamilton
EMERGENCY & COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
ADDENDUM

Meeting #: ECS 25-001
Date: February 6, 2025
Time: 1:30 p.m.
Location: Council Chambers
Hamilton City Hall
71 Main Street West

Jessica Versace, Legislative Coordinator (905) 546-2424 ext. 3993

8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.3 HSC25004

- *a. Correspondence respecting Item 8.3, Community Safety and Wellbeing: Gender Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence, from the Woman Abuse Working Group:

From: WAWG Hamilton <wawgpc@gmail.com>

Sent: January 31, 2025 10:34 AM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: WAWG correspondence for Feb 6 Presentation to the ECS

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments

Good morning,

Please find attached the correspondence in relation to item 8.3: Community Safety and Wellbeing: Gender Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence.

This correspondence is included as part of WAWG's presentation.

Thank you,

In solidarity,

Thea Symonds, Coordinator
Woman Abuse Working Group (WAWG)

www.wawg.ca



RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

for the City of Hamilton
2024-2025

Introduction

WAWG

The Woman Abuse Working Group (WAWG) is the Violence Against Women Community Coordinating Committee for Hamilton. We are a coalition led by Violence Against Women (VAW) organizations, working with community and government agencies, and guided by survivors. We are committed to the eradication of violence against women and their children. We strive to reflect and represent the diversity of our community. WAWG is the only multi-sector table that focuses on gender-based violence and intimate partner violence in Hamilton, and holds the necessary experience and expertise to propel change.

WAWG currently has 23 member agencies from various sectors including: violence against women, justice, health, education, immigration/newcomer services, Indigenous services, sexual violence, child welfare, French language services and others. List of the members can be found in the appendix. WAWG members are part of various community tables and protocols, including but not limited to:

- December 6th Montreal Massacre Memorial Committee (The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women)
- Domestic Violence Court Advisory Committee (DVCAC)
- Feminist Law and Policy Reform Coalition
- French Language Agreement
- Hamilton Anti-Human Trafficking Committee (HAHTC)
- Hamilton Legal Advocates Committee
- Hamilton Police Services High Risk Domestic Violence Community Advisory Committee (HPDVCAC High Risk DV)
- Hamilton Police Services / Violence Against Women Emergency Shelter Protocol Committee
- Hamilton Shelter Directors
- Hamilton Transitional Housing Support Worker (THWS) Committee International Women's Day Committee
- Ontario Association of Interval & Transition Houses (OAITH)
- Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres (OCRCC)
- Sexual Assault Community Review Team (SACRT)
- Sisters in Spirit (SIS)
- The Professional Aboriginal Advocacy Networking Groups (PAANG)
- Take Back the Night Committee (TBTN)
- VAW/HDFS/CCAS Collaboration Committee
- Women's Housing Planning Collaborative (WHPC)
- Women's Services Advisory to the Chief of Police

GBV Epidemic

On July 7th, 2023, in response to the first recommendation of the 86 inquest recommendations into the femicides of Carol Culleton, Anastasia Kurzyk, and Natalie Warmerdam, WAWG called for the City Council to officially declare intimate partner violence and gender based violence an epidemic in the City of Hamilton, and to take action on the following:

1. Declare intimate partner violence and gender based violence an epidemic in the city of Hamilton
2. Call on the government of Ontario to formally declare gender based violence and intimate partner violence an epidemic.
3. Ensure that intimate partner violence and gender based violence be integrated into the city of Hamilton's community safety and well-being plan.
4. Engage in meaningful consultation with WAWG, as intimate partner violence and gender based violence stakeholders and experts in the field on a quarterly basis.
5. Continue to increase pressure on the province of Ontario to recognize the need for adequate and stable funding for all organizations providing intimate partner violence, gender based violence and sexual violence support services.
6. Continue to expand on existing services for rural areas of Hamilton.

The City of Hamilton was the 34th municipality in Ontario to make the declaration. Today there are 95 municipalities and counties that have declared gender based violence and/or intimate partner violence an epidemic.

Hamilton has shown a deep commitment to this work by not only making the declaration, but also by agreeing to develop recommendations with WAWG that will further address gender based violence, intimate partner violence and sexual violence in Hamilton. As evident in our Snapshot for 2023, outlining statistics gathered by over 20 member agencies, gender based violence, intimate partner violence and sexual violence are urgent matters to be addressed. In 2023 there were over 5,993 shelter crisis/helpline calls, 1,735 calls to the sexual assault centre's crisis support line, 1,130 women and children who accessed shelter, over 5,644 requests for VAW shelter that were turned down due to shortage of beds, a six month waitlist to receive counselling services from the sexual assault centre, and a 6 month waitlist for Supervised Access Program services. These stats only represent those that were able to reach out for services. As we know that reporting intimate partner violence and sexual violence is vastly underreported for reasons including: fear of police/court system intervention, lack of trust of criminal justice system, and fear of shame/stigma, we can only imagine the number of people experiencing violence and needing support. (Statistics Canada, 2021) Further statistical information can be found in the appendix.

Indigenous women, BIPOC women, newcomers and refugees, immigrants, sex workers, and 2SLGBTQIA+ community are disproportionately affected. Rural women in Hamilton are also affected. Even though 43% of Hamilton is considered rural, many of Hamilton's resources are only accessible in the urban areas which creates many barriers for women experiencing violence to access key supports which enhance their safety. Gender based violence and intimate partner violence intersects with many other experiences requiring Hamilton to provide further support for

equity-deserving groups including women experiencing homelessness, living in encampments, needing more robust mental health and additional support. Regarding the cost of gender based violence and intimate partner violence as it intersects with housing, the Just Recovery Hamilton Coalition has shared:

The City of Hamilton has recognized that most of the houseless population comprises women and gender diverse individuals – 53% of the unhoused population. This demographic is disproportionately affected by housing insecurity and experiences of "invisible homelessness," such as couch surfing or relying on survival sex work. Furthermore, they are often responsible for caring for families and are disproportionately impacted by landlords converting large homes into multiple rental units. To address this issue, the City of Hamilton must provide targeted services and support, such as increased transitional housing units, designated social housing units and rental subsidies, that align with the proportion of women and gender diverse individuals experiencing homelessness. To better provide affordable housing for women and gender-diverse people, the City of Hamilton must:

- *Increase funding for affordable housing for women and gender diverse people.*
- *Invest in purpose-built transitional housing for women and gender diverse residents*

(Just Recovery Hamilton Coalition, 2023, p. 17)

The City must address these systemic issues by expanding the availability of safe, accessible, longterm housing options for houseless residents. Once considered a temporary measure, shelter beds are not viable alternatives to housing-first solutions like transitional and supportive housing. Every \$10 invested in supportive housing has an average savings of \$21.72 across the healthcare, social services and justice systems. A unit of supportive social housing costs only \$613/month; by contrast, a hospital bed is \$13,000/month, a correctional bed \$4300 a month and a shelter bed \$2100/month.

(Just Recovery Hamilton Coalition, 20023, p. 15)

Purpose of WAWG's Recommendations

This report and subsequent recommendations are being prepared as requested by the City of Hamilton, following their declaration of GBV/IPV as an epidemic in the City of Hamilton. We are glad to have been engaged to provide recommendations for the City of Hamilton. We see the City of Hamilton as both a key supporter and also a broker in advocating for change and advancing the needs with the province to adequately support addressing GBV/IPV. We are hopeful that these actionable items will be taken in a way that the issue of GBV/IPV demands, with the rising rates of femicide and experiences of violence.

During the preparation of this report, there is a provincial process unfolding to declare IPV an epidemic - Bill 173, which we hope will be passed and provide additional recommendations that will support and align with our current work in addressing GBV/IPV in Hamilton and across the province.

We hope that this report will support the City of Hamilton with recommendations that require long-term and sustainable investments made by the City. WAWG requests an annual or biannual review and to have the City report back to WAWG on a regular basis (i.e. as a standing item on the WAWG agenda) through the City representative that participates periodically at the WAWG table.

Recommendations & Budget/Cost

Note: Any and all funding to be distributed without reallocating existing or potential funds from the VAW shelters and service system

Minimum request from the City to respond to immediate crises:

Community Collaboration & Investment

1. Invest in critical community coordination, which is integral to femicide prevention, the maximization of resources available, and valuing the additional work all WAWG members do, by:
 - a. Annualizing unrestricted funding in the amount that the City provided WAWG in 2023, \$30,129.00 (with increases to reflect inflation/cost of living etc) with WAWG reporting back to the City how the funding will be used; and cover cost of annualized commitments of WAWG:
 - b. Increasing funding so that WAWG can achieve more in the city and assist with further planning, coordination and implementation of applicable recommendations, in the amount of \$50,000
 - c. WAWG to prioritize annual work plan to determine how any remaining and additional funds from the City will be utilized

This is an investment in community coordination as currently all the agencies that WAWG brings together do the work on the side of their desk, with the support of only one part-time staff member.

Awareness & Training

2. Agree to GBV/IPV/SV training, onboarding and ongoing, for City staff, including City Councillors (at least a 3 day training schedule on annual basis)
 - a. WAWG to coordinate and facilitate training and/or coordinate member organizations to deliver trainings as already available. \$10,000 annually from the City for this training to be available to the participating agencies. WAWG will determine the distribution.

Inter-government Relations

3. Advocate for increased annualized funding for all VAWCCs in Ontario from our provincial government

Prevention/Public Education

4. Funding for prevention, public awareness and education work to address GBV/IPV/ SV
 - a. I.e. SACHA, which provides public education for all topics SV, IPV, GBV, workplace harassment, etc, has one public educator for Hamilton's 800,000+ population.
5. Permanently cover the bi-annual cost of putting up WAWG's banners in May (for Sexual Assault Prevention Month) and November (Woman Abuse Prevention Month) at City Hall
6. Make funds available for an annual community event in November to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and/or pay for the venue. Suggested amount is \$1500 to start.

Implementation

7. *Formally adopt WAWG's suggested definition of femicide and implement usage. "Femicide is the misogynist killing of women, girls, and gender diverse individuals because of their gender, overwhelmingly committed by men."*
8. Work with WAWG to develop a media response by the City when a femicide happens in Hamilton
9. Invest in consistent response of media to femicide in Hamilton
10. Make a shift towards prevention-oriented, collaborate, whole community responses
11. Integrate Intimate Partner Violence and Gender Based Violence as a priority in Community Safety and Well Being plans

Accountability

12. Continue to provide a representative from the City to be accessible to WAWG and to periodically connect with WAWG admin
13. Have meetings with WAWG admin/members - at least biannually
14. Prioritize a plan to support women and gender-diverse people living in rural areas of Hamilton and experiencing gender-based violence.

- a. Support women living rurally and their transportation by prioritizing staff funding for rural areas that are mobile.
 - b. As Interval House of Hamilton is the designated point agency in delivering rural support to women, the City of Hamilton and the Province should provide \$150,000 each, equaling 1 mobile rural FTE counselor each, who will be a permanent support for women living rurally and that will build on existing programs and services in rural communities provided by Interval House of Hamilton.
- 15. Annualized funding for Sisters In Spirit (SIS) Committee demonstrating commitment to SIS events in the amount of \$5,000
- 16. Work with Hamilton Police Services Board to advocate to the provincial government for Gender Based Violence/Intimate Partner Violence to be declared as a hate crime.
 - a. Gender Based Violence/Intimate Partner Violence to be viewed as a public safety issue and count Gender Based Violence/Intimate Partner Violence and femicide in hate crime numbers
- 17. Provide up to \$6,000 for WAWG's publications to be translated into French, and \$4,000 for purchase of services for interpretation on an annual basis.

Long term goals that require additional investments

- 1. Additional annualized funding for WAWG to employ a full time staff.
WAWG initiatives that could be made possible with increase staffing budget:
 - ✓ Develop privacy protocols with all member agencies to facilitate sharing of information and referral pathways, and/or
 - ✓ Develop a community approach to risk assessment, and/or
 - ✓ Support with development and delivery of existing and ongoing public education plans (by WAWG member agencies) to engage the broader community, and/or
 - ✓ Develop a public presentation for WAWG which could be used in spaces such as police onboarding
- 2. The City should look at addressing any gaps in existing transportation infrastructure.
- 3. Increase safe, affordable housing options for women who have experienced violence and face increased risk due to gendered housing crisis*

VAW Shelters in Hamilton are not only turning away women and children in the thousands (Inasmuch House alone turned away 5,715 women looking for space between 2019-2022. This number doesn't include the children who are also experiencing the violence), due to capacity pressures

Women and children can't find safe affordable housing to move into so they remain in the shelter system for longer. As a result, our VAW shelters are unable to serve the number of women and children who desperately require and deserve safety, our support, and services. Without shelter, safe and affordable housing, and specialized services, women and children's lives are at risk. Rates of Femicide in our province are proof of that.

Women and children are dying, and the numbers are dramatically increasing every year.

*This is in alignment with the integration of a gender and equity lens in the budgetary planning and processes. Investment in a continuum of shelter and housing options that match the scale of need for the gendered housing crisis is critical to addressing both increased risk and homelessness experienced by those fleeing gender based violence. The municipality plays a key role in supporting investments both directly through funding of existing proposals, as well as indirectly by working with all levels of government to ensure existing housing proposals receive the fulsome support needed to break ground and operationalize projects.

4. Research the impact, causes, and cost to the City of lack of VAW shelter space in Hamilton with the support of an external contractor
5. Have a three year process for VAW services to be approved for funding rather than annually. Recommendation from the City Enrichment fund:

"That the City Enrichment Fund adopt a multi-year funding process (3-5 years) for returning applicants who continue to receive an "A" grading and provide support for residents facing (dealing with the impacts of) IPV, GBV and SV. This will support organizations in establishing their annual budgets, reduce administrative burden and allow staff to focus on direct service provision and advocacy."

6. Invest in core emergency services through VAW Shelter support:
Allocation of budget to increase funds for VAW shelters to support immediate and future plans presented by respective VAW emergency shelters to cover the costs of unfunded beds and adding additional beds to relieve current capacity issues and lack of funding. And, work with the Province to address gaps.
 - ✓ Would support with expanding resources to meet the demand for service, and increase short-term support to accommodate longer-term needs of women
 - ✓ Increase engagement and support for rural communities and marginalized populations
 - ✓ Provide varying availability of appointment times for VAW services, such as evening and weekend options
 - ✓ Would support Shelter table/working group

7. Increased support to Sexual Assault Centre:

SACHA has been supporting survivors of sexual violence and offering prevention education in Hamilton since 1975: services include counselling to survivors of recent and historical sexual violence, accompaniment to hospital, police and court, advocacy and crisis support. Community awareness, outreach to isolated survivors, and prevention programming on sexual violence and other forms of violence are offered as part of services.

Recommendations from SACHA on how the city could financially invest in supporting survivors of SV, GBV and IPV through their local sexual assault centre:

- ✓ Fund the hiring of 1 full-time public educator and support public education programming in the City of Hamilton - in the amount of \$100,000 per year
- ✓ Fund the hiring of 1 part-time public educator in the amount of \$50,000 per year
- ✓ SACHA has one public educator for Hamilton's 800,000+ population. Another full-time or even part-time person to do public education at SACHA would be a great benefit for the city. SACHA provides public education for all topics SV, IPV, GBV, workplace harassment etc.- This is a part of abuse prevention.
- ✓ Fund the hiring of 1 part-time counsellor in the amount of \$50,000 per year to address existing counselling wait list of 5 months
- ✓ Cover the cost of policing required for traffic enforcement/control at Take Back the Night - in the amount of \$5,000 per year
- ✓ Cover the cost of City of Hamilton Staffing Costs for Take Back the Night - in the amount of \$1,100 per year
- ✓ Provide SACHA HSR bus tickets (paid for by the City) for the calendar year to support survivors transportation to and from appointments \$2000

8. Increased and dedicated support for Indigenous focused community organizations and women they serve, ensuring \$9,000 available annually for traditional Indigenous knowledge keepers and necessary materials at events put on or supported by WAWG

Additional long term recommendations from Native Women Centre to support Indigenous communities and clients:

- ✓ Indigenous GBV/IPV Counsellor, recommended at least \$60,000
- ✓ Elder Honorariums - \$600/day or \$350/half Day
- ✓ Drumming Group Honorarium \$80/person or \$150.00/group
- ✓ Indigenous Culture Educator / Group Facilitator - in the amount of \$60,000 (includes mercs/admin) + additional funds for programming cost (ribbon skirts/shirts, drums, rattles, beading workshops)
- ✓ Sponsor an Indigenous Social/Pow Wow in the community to support bring back and incorporating Indigenous culture (food, strawberry juice/sweet grass tea, music, teachings, regalia, beading, etc)
- ✓ Indigenous Child and Youth Counsellor / Group Facilitator - in the amount of \$60,000 (includes mercs/admin)

- ✓ Funding to create medicine bundles (shell, tobacco, cedar, sweetgrass and sage) for each indigenous identifying person accessing shelter services

9. Additional investments to support staff in these roles as the subject matter experts that they are:

- ✓ Increase in VAW/GBV/SV counselling money and hours
- ✓ Increase in child witnessing counselling / groups
- ✓ Increase in staff training money

Future considerations

Support annual survivors memorial walk initiated by WAVES (the survivor advisory group of WAWG) through:

- ✓ Providing City space for the walk
- ✓ Cost of policing at the event as required by the SEAT.
- ✓ Cost of City Staff who have to clean/set up the area (if using the city hall forecourt)
- ✓ An annual monetary contribution towards the event
- ✓ Commitment from council/mayor to attend the event and/or to send at least one member of council as a representative and to offer greetings (if desired by WAVES)

Support from SEAT employees in completing the applications and completing the required steps associated with the application

Ongoing Notes of Consideration

Below are some extracted recommendations from Culleton, Kuzyk & Warmerdam Inquest Jury Recommendations* that may be helpful to consider:

System Approaches, Collaboration and Communication

R7. Ensure that IPV issues are addressed using an all-government approach across ministries and governments

R8. Require that all justice system participants who work with IPV survivors and perpetrator are trained and engaged in a trauma-informed approach

R9. Explore incorporating restorative justice and community-based approaches in dealing with appropriate IPV cases to ensure safety and best outcomes for survivors

R10. Encourage IPV to be integrated into every municipality's community safety and well-being plan

Education and Training

R23. Develop and implement a new approach to public education campaigns to promote awareness of IPV, including finding opportunities to reach a wider audience in rural communities

Measures Addressing Perpetrators of IPV

R33. Provide services aimed at addressing perpetrators of IPV

R34. Recognize the specialized knowledge and expertise of IPV service providers involved in perpetrator intervention and support the development of workforce capacity within the sector

R36. Improve the coordination of services addressing substance use, mental health, child protection and IPV perpetration and encourage cross-agency service provision and case management.

R38. Ensure IPV-related public education addresses perpetration and should include men's voices, experiences and prompt men to seek help to address their own abusive behaviours.

R39. Endeavour to minimize destabilizing factors for perpetrators of IPV that increase risk, correlates of IPV, and barriers for survivors to leave violence. Specific consideration should be given to financial instability, housing insecurity, and mental health issues, including addictions treatment options, and how these factors and potential solutions are affected by rural contexts.

Intervention

R41. Investigate and develop a common framework for risk assessment in IPV cases, which includes a common understanding of IPV risk factors and lethality. This should be done in meaningful consultation and collaboration with those impacted by and assisting survivors of IPV, and consider key IPV principles, including victim-centred, intersectional, gender-specific, trauma-informed, anti-oppressive, and evidence-based approaches.

Safety

R60. Review and amend, where appropriate, standard language templates for bail and probation conditions in IPV cases and develop a framework for identifying the appropriate conditions based on level of risk in collaboration with stakeholders, including judges, justices of the peace, police, probation, crown attorneys, the CFO, and community providers with subject matter expertise in IPV risk management.

*https://lukesplace.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CKW-Inquest-Verdict-Recommendations-SIGNED_Redacted.pdf

Appendix

WAWG Membership

- Banyan Community Services
- Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton
- Centre de Santé Communautaire Hamilton/Niagara
- Children's and Community Services, City of Hamilton
- Good Shepherd Women's Services
 - Martha House
 - Mary's Place
- Hamilton Health Sciences Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Care Centre
- Hamilton Police Service - Intimate Partner Violence Unit
- Hamilton Police Service - Victim Services
- Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
- Hamilton Wentworth District School Board
- Immigrant Working Centre
- Indigenous Victim Services
- Interval House of Hamilton – Women's Centre of Hamilton
- John Howard Society Hamilton
- Mission Services of Hamilton
 - Inasmuch House
 - Emma's Place
 - Willow's Place
- Native Women's Centre
- Nisa Homes
- Positive Health Network
- SACHA - Sexual Assault Centre – (Hamilton & Area)
- Sexual Violence Prevention and Response -Equity and Inclusion Office- McMaster University
- Victim Witness Assistance Program (MAG)
- Womankind
- YWCA Hamilton

2023 VAW Snapshot



Snapshot 2023

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2023
HAMILTON, ON

POLICING & JUSTICE

Police DV/IPV calls	12,042
Police DV/IPV reports	6,920
Police DV/IPV related charges	3,514
Police reported SV	606
Police reported human trafficking	13
Femicides/Domestic Homicides	1

SAFETY & SUPPORTS

Women, children in shelter (GS, IH, EP, WK, IHOH, CSCHN, NWC)	1,130
Women who received transitional living support (GS, IHOH, YWCA)	628
DV/SV/VAW reports to VAW agency (WP, IWC, SADVCC, SVPRO, GS, NWC)	2,543
Number of women who received VAW counselling (GS, CSCHN, IH, IHOH, YWCA, WP, SACHA, SADVCC, NWC)	2,057
Women new referrals for VAW counselling (GS, SACHA, CSCHN, IHOH, YWCA, SADVCC)	1,322
Women accessing homeless/precariouly housed supports (WP, WK, YWCA, IH)	2,117
Women experiencing homelessness accessing transitional/drop-in support (WP, YWCA, CSCHN)	2,048

CRISIS & HELPLINES

Shelter crisis/helpline calls (IH, WP, IHOH, GS, NWC)	5,993
SV crisis/helpline calls	1,735
Number of Supervised Parenting Services visits	417
Self-identified Indigenous women in shelter/receiving support (WP, GS, IH, YWCA, WK, IHOH, NWC)	280
Francophone/French speaking women in shelter/receiving support (GS, CSCHN, YWCA, IH, WK, IHOH)	90
Newcomer, Immigrants and Refugees in shelter/receiving support (WP, WK, IHOH, YWCA)	193

GAPS/BARRIERS

- **5,644** requests for VAW shelter turned down due to shortage of beds. (GS, EP, WK, NWC)
- Significant gap for marginalized women experiencing VAW and homelessness.
- 6 month waitlist for counselling from the sexual assault centre.
- 6 month waitlist for Supervised Access Program services.

WAWG MEMBERSHIP & PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

*= contributed stats to this snapshot

- The AIDS Network
- Banyan Community Services
- Catholic Children's Aid Society
- Carol Anne's Place* (CAP)
- Centre de Santé Communautaire Hamilton/Niagara* (CSCHN)
- Good Shepherd Women's Services* (GS)
- Hamilton Health Sciences Sexual Assault/ Domestic Violence Care Centre* (SADVCC)
- Hamilton Police Services* - Intimate Partner Violence Unit
- Hamilton Police Services - Victim Services
- Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
- Immigrant Working Centre* (IWC)
- Indigenous Victim Services
- Interval House of Hamilton* (IHOH)
- Ministry of the Attorney General, Victim Witness Assistance Program
- Mission Services, Emma's Place* (EP)
- Mission Services, Inasmuch House* (IH)
- Mission Services, Willow's Place* (WP)
- Native Women's Centre
- Sexual Assault Centre - Hamilton & Area* (SACHA)
- Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office, McMaster University* (SVPRO)
- Supervised Access Program* (SAP)
- Womankind* (WK)
- YWCA Hamilton* (YWCA)

DV = Domestic Violence, SV = Sexual Violence
IPV = Intimate Partner Violence, VAW = Violence Against Women

Disclaimer: Numbers are based on the agencies who were able to provide stats.
We recognize the intersections and that various individuals may use multiple services.

@WAWGHAMILTON

WAWG.CA

WAWGPC@GMAIL.COM

Statistics regarding Sexual Violence in Canada from the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

In 2021, Statistics Canada found that reported sexual assault rates was 18% higher than it was in 2020, and at the highest rate since 1962. Anyone can experience sexual violence. Even so, sexual violence can't be separated from a broader context—one in which the person who is victimized, the person who has caused harm, and the community and systems surrounding them exist in larger structures of inequity. For example:

- Rates of sexual assault are higher among 15 to 24 year olds (103 per 1,000) and 25 to 34 year olds (50 per 1,000) than any other age group
- Racialized women face more difficulties when reporting sexual violence, and when engaging with the criminal justice system as victims of crime
- Indigenous women in Canada are three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be violently or sexually assaulted
- Physical violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are all significantly more common experiences of racialized trans and gender nonbinary people compared to non-racialized people: 1 in 3 racialized respondents had been sexually assaulted in the past 5 years

(OCRCC, 2024, p. 1)

When sexual violence happens, the victim's life is derailed in a hundred different ways. Impacts includes shame, fear, anxiety, depression and traumatic stress reactions: "research shows that survivors experience significant psychological distress and concerns for their safety and well-being as a result of cyber-sexual harassment, sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual assault, [and] stalking". When someone discloses sexual violence, relationships often change or are lost, particularly where the offender is known to the victim (the majority of cases). Survivors can also face many health impacts. Stress associated with sexual violence has been shown to negatively impact physical health, including loss of appetite, weight gain or loss, headaches, and sleep disturbances such as insomnia and fatigue.

We also know of the resilience of survivors and their capacity to heal. Research shows that the impacts of sexual violence can be reduced with effective support, and we see this in our community-based work. When survivors receive a supportive response after they disclose, the benefits of talking about one's experience of sexual violence are in fact "associated with improved psychological health, increased comfort, support, and validation, and desired outcomes such as penalizing the perpetrator and protecting others" in the future.

(OCRCC, 2024, p. 2)

Ontario's community-based sexual assault centres are making a difference for survivors that come through their doors and contact their crisis lines. We build on survivors' experiences, and leverage their existing strengths. We are doing our part; but more resources need to be directed at addressing the limitations... Community-based sexual violence support services need intentional investment. Together, we can close the gaps between the current reality and the ideal situation.

(OCRCC, 2024, p. 12)

Resources

- [Final Report | MMIWG \(mmiwg-ffada.ca\)](http://mmiwg-ffada.ca)
- [The National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence - Canada.ca](http://TheNationalActionPlanToEndGender-basedViolence-Canada.ca)
- [86 Recommendations for change from the Renfrew County Inquest - Luke's Place \(lucesplace.ca\)](http://86RecommendationsforchangefromtheRenfrewCountyInquest-Luke'sPlace(lukesplace.ca))
- <https://justrecoveryhamilton.ca/the-second-policy-paper>
- <https://sexualassaultsupport.ca/>

