



THE PROJECT TO END  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**A SUITE OF POLICY AND  
LEGISLATION  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
THE GOVERNMENT OF  
ALBERTA TO ADVANCE  
PRIMARY PREVENTION OF  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

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## Acknowledging Indigenous Territory and Peoples

Shift wants to acknowledge that our team members live across Turtle Island in what is today known as Canada. We acknowledge that the places we call home have deep ties to the Indigenous Peoples that have stewarded this land since time immemorial. We also acknowledge that colonial actors and institutions perpetually deny Indigenous Peoples their rights to self-determination and sovereignty and these institutions must be challenged and changed. Shift is committed to the advancement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

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## NOTE TO READER

This report seeks to inform the Alberta Primary Prevention Framework (APPF) project, a partnership with the Government of Alberta and IMPACT, a network of over 300 anti-violence organizations in Alberta. The report draws on recommendations from sexual violence prevention reports, framed based on Shift's values, specifically our commitment to primary prevention, to eradicating the systems of oppression at the root of domestic and sexual violence, and to promoting the norms of empathy and peace, gender equality, and social inclusion as primary prevention strategies. Our recommendations also reflect feedback provided by the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services (AASAS). During our meetings with senior AASAS leaders, several tensions emerged between research findings and practitioners' experiences. As a result, we tried to capture these as **discussion points** below that we hope will promote further conversations between IMPACT, policymakers, practitioners, people with lived experiences, and researchers as we try to stop sexual violence from happening in the first place.

The discussion points are:

1. *How do we ensure that the sexual violence sector receives adequate attention and investment in the APPF as it is often overlooked and overshadowed by the domestic violence field?*
2. *How do we reconcile primary, secondary, and tertiary sexual violence prevention with limited funding and the sector's capacities and resources?*
3. *How do we maintain focus on both perpetrator accountability and the systems that enable perpetrators while supporting survivors?*
4. *How can the sector teach people not to use violence and at the same time, teach women/girls/boys how to reduce their risks of being sexually victimized when these approaches reinforce victim-blaming?*
5. *How can we support positive sexuality as a form of empowerment while many researchers and people in the sector see some behaviours, such as early sexual debut, multiple sexual partners, or consensual sexting, as risky?*
6. *How do we do justice to topics like sexual violence, abuse and unhealthy sexual practices when teaching healthy sexuality?*

This report does not provide exhaustive answers to these questions but encourages all the stakeholders to continue the dialogue for advancing primary prevention. At this time (January 2023), this paper is reflective of the research to date, as AASAS is planning to do community consultations to provide additional perspectives including but not limited to survivors; sexual assault centres; multi-disciplinary service providers; and equity-deserving groups in the upcoming year.

N.B. In this report, we do not discuss sexual violence prevention against Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples' unique history and experiences of colonization, anti-Indigenous discrimination, heteronormative patriarchy, and government policies aimed at destroying Indigenous sovereignty call for a separate research and policy-making agenda. Shift's [\*Strong Women's Circle\*](#) report addresses violence against Indigenous Peoples from this perspective.<sup>1</sup>

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## 1.0 Overview of the problem of sexual violence

This report informs the design of the Alberta Primary Prevention Framework (APPF), whose goal is to help the Government of Alberta and IMPACT to direct attention, time, and money towards primary prevention to stop domestic and sexual violence in Alberta before they start. This report outlines legislation and policy reforms that the Government of Alberta and the anti-violence sector can implement to prevent sexual violence. While many primary prevention initiatives in the APPF will address both domestic and sexual violence, this report focuses only on the initiatives that can help prevent sexual violence specifically. This approach ensures that we cover all the pathways to and prevention strategies against sexual violence.

The report is based on a comprehensive review of over 70 governmental gender equality and violence prevention plans, and almost 400 documents produced by Canadian research and civil society organizations working for women's and equity deserving groups' rights. Recommendations outlined here reflect the lived experiences of women and equity deserving groups as well as evidence-based and evidence-informed laws, policies, initiatives, and programs that have either been proven to prevent sexual violence or show promising results.

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*“Primary prevention means preventing initial perpetration by eliminating the normalization of violence and social hierarchies of power and by eradicating gender and socio-economic inequalities that drive domestic and sexual violence, which can be achieved by 1) implementing effective initiatives that promote empathy and healing in individuals and families to build healthy families and communities, and 2) changing norms, cultures, structures, and systems to promote equity, inclusion, and safety from violence in families, communities, and institutions so that we can begin to 3) re-imagine our society based on justice, liberation, and peace.”<sup>2</sup>*

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While domestic and sexual violence are both grave public health concerns that share root causes, drivers, and primary prevention strategies, public discussions of domestic violence often overshadow those of sexual violence. This report seeks to do justice to sexual violence as *a distinct yet interrelated form of violence*, which must be addressed together with domestic violence *upstream*, but which also requires specific primary prevention strategies.

This report provides a definition and typology of sexual violence, explains its root causes and drivers, makes a case for prioritizing sexual violence prevention on par with domestic violence prevention, and outlines specific legislation and policy recommendations for the provincial government and the Alberta anti-violence sector to stop violence before it starts.

## 1.1 Definition and types of sexual violence

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*Sexual violence is any sexual act or any attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments, unwanted sexual advances, acts to traffic, or other acts directed against a person's sexuality that use coercion, committed by any person in any relationship to the survivor and in any setting, be it private or public.<sup>3</sup>*

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Coercion, which underpins sexual violence, encompasses a spectrum of degrees of force used by the perpetrator, ranging from physical force to psychological intimidation, blackmail, and threats, and includes instances when the victimized person is unable to consent (e.g., due to substance use, being asleep, or mentally incapable of understanding the situation).<sup>4</sup> Keeping this definition in mind is important because it dispels many myths around sexual violence, including the mistaken belief that it is primarily perpetrated by dangerous strangers in public spaces after dark, involves brutal physical force, results in grave injuries, and always equals rape.<sup>5,6</sup> Sexual violence covers a range of non-consensual behaviours of sexual nature. While listing all forms of sexual violence is beyond the scope of this report, some prominent forms include:

- **Sexual assault:** an assault committed in circumstances of a sexual nature so that the sexual integrity of the victim is violated.<sup>7</sup> Sexual assault encompasses a range of non-consensual sexual activities from unwanted sexual touching (sexual assault level 1) to non-consensual sexual activity perpetrated with a weapon, through threats, or bodily harm (sexual assault level 2), and non-consensual sexual activity resulting in wounding, maiming, disfiguring or endangering the life of the victim (aggravated sexual assault level 3).<sup>8</sup>
- **Sexual harassment:** unwanted, often coercive, sexual behaviour directed by one person toward another that can include suggestive remarks, sexual jokes or compromising invitations; visual display of suggestive sexual images; leering or whistling; patting, rubbing, or other unwanted physical contact; outright demands for sexual favours; and physical assault.<sup>9</sup>
- **Sexual abuse:** sexual activity with a person unable to consent (e.g., a child, a senior, or a person with disabilities).<sup>10</sup>
- **Sex trafficking:** a form of human trafficking that involves recruiting, moving, or holding individuals for sexual exploitation, and using coercion by force or through threats, including mental and emotional abuse and manipulation.<sup>11</sup>
- **Technology facilitated sexual violence:** any sexual violence that is committed, assisted, or aggravated in part or fully by the use of the Internet or communication technologies, such as social media platforms, email, forums, websites, messaging platforms, or smartphones.<sup>12</sup> It includes technology-specific forms of sexual violence such as catfishing, zoombombing, or non-consensual sexting, as well as forms that combine technologically facilitated and in-person sexual violence (e.g., using technology to lure a person with the intent of sexually assaulting, abusing, or trafficking them).

## 1.2 Root causes and drivers of sexual violence

The **root causes** of both domestic and sexual violence are **systems of oppression**, specifically, heteronormative patriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism.<sup>13</sup>

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***Heteronormative patriarchy** is a social system in which, on average, heterosexual men have the most power, privilege, and control in political, economic, cultural, and social roles.<sup>14</sup>*

***Capitalism** is a form of economic and social organization focused on wealth accumulation and maximization of profit by normalizing inequalities, competition, valuing relationships for their usefulness and material benefit, and exploitation.<sup>15</sup>*

***White supremacy** is a political, economic, and cultural system in which white people overwhelmingly control power and material resources based on conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement, which are embodied and reproduced as relations of white dominance across institutions and social settings.<sup>16</sup>*

***Colonialism** is the practice of maintaining political and economic control over a social group deemed inferior within one's nation or over other nations.<sup>17</sup>*

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These systems of oppression are the underlying cause of violence, but they are largely invisible in our everyday lives. However, they are made visible by their manifestations, or the **drivers** of domestic and sexual violence. The drivers include **the normalization of violence and inequality, and gender and socio-economic inequalities**.

**The normalization of violence** is mainstreaming the idea that humans, particularly men, are inherently violent and that using various expressions of violence (e.g., verbal aggression, coercion, or control) is an acceptable means of advancing one's interests as individuals, communities, or nations. Violence is normalized in the language we use; in our educational institutions and workplaces based on "cut-throat competition" and conflict; in our leisure activities, many of which involve aggressive rivalry and combat, be it sports, games, or video games; in social media, mass media, and entertainment, which show explicit images of violence; and in politics and war, where discourse and political decisions support confrontation, humiliation, domination, and violence.

**The normalization of inequality** is mainstreaming the idea that humans can be ranked into a socially acceptable hierarchy of individuals and groups based on their social identities, with some social groups deserving a higher status, more power, and more control over resources and decision-making. Historical inequalities are explained by simplistic ideas of innate capability and meritocracy (i.e., the claim that social power and resources are distributed based on talent, effort, and achievement rather than privilege). This obscures complex historical processes, such as exploitation and social, political, and economic disenfranchisement, which shape individuals' and groups' unequal socio-economic and political outcomes. Inequality is also normalized in the language we use (e.g., through stereotypes and discriminatory language); in all our systems and institutions, which ignore how systemic barriers rather than capacity result in different social, political, and economic outcomes for different groups; in social media, mass media, and entertainment, which either ignore or negatively portray some social groups; and in politics where most politicians represent the interests of dominant groups.



**Gender inequality** is a socially unequal division into femininity and masculinity that shapes people's identities, as well as cultural ideals and stereotypes of women and men. This division manifests itself in the gendered division of labour based on parallel gender roles in households, institutions, and systems, and creates a hierarchy of power and domination, with men generally enjoying greater status, power, and access to resources and decision-making.<sup>18</sup> For example, in dominant narratives, men are portrayed as more ambitious, suitable for leadership, and entrepreneurial, which leads to lower numbers of female leaders and more limited investment into women-owned businesses.<sup>19</sup>

**Socio-economic inequality** is a hierarchical organization of social groups based on their class, gender identity, sexuality, age, ability, racialized group, immigration status, Indigenous status, and other social identities. This hierarchy leads to relationships of domination and subordination and differential status, power, and access to resources and decision-making among social groups.<sup>20</sup> For example, in dominant narratives, children and youth, people with disabilities, and seniors are portrayed as unproductive, as a result of which their voices are silenced in public debates, their needs ignored in policymaking, and their outcomes in all areas negatively impacted.<sup>21</sup>

The drivers of violence have shaped our **culture**, including our social norms, values, and beliefs; our **structures**, including laws, policies, and practices; our **systems**, such as education, labour market, healthcare, etc.; and our **communities**. The drivers of violence have also shaped how we interact with others, which has resulted in **internalized oppression or privilege and unhealed trauma**. As a result, our culture, structures, systems, communities, and family, peer, and work interactions collectively create and reinforce conditions that support and drive sexual violence.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.3 Manifestations of sexual violence drivers

The general drivers of domestic and sexual violence show up in our daily lives as specific norms, narratives, structures, systems, and practices that make particular forms of violence thinkable and doable and justify violence against specific social groups. For example, the normalization of violence and economic inequalities results in poverty and financial exploitation and creates favourable conditions for sex trafficking. Because women, Indigenous Peoples, children and youth, and members of equity deserving groups are seen as inferior, they are overrepresented among the survivors of sex trafficking.

Some ways in which the drivers show up in our daily lives normalize and promote sexual violence more specifically. These manifestations of sexual violence drivers include:

- Traditional norms and expectations about rigid gender roles,<sup>23</sup> specifically viewing women as good wives and mothers and/or sexual objects,<sup>24</sup> and normalizing male domination and female submissiveness.<sup>25, 26</sup>
- Backlash against gender equality and women's sexual autonomy (e.g., outcry against the #MeToo movement, the assault on women's sexual and reproductive rights, the far-right glorification of traditional gender roles, and tradwives' groups that advocate for traditional roles and responsibilities for women and promote the cult of domesticity on social media).<sup>27,28</sup>
- Normalization of the masculine sense of sexual entitlement<sup>29</sup> and societal tolerance of sexual conquest and aggression.<sup>30</sup>



- Male peer relations that emphasize aggression, sexual conquest, and disrespect towards women and children.<sup>31</sup>
- Normalization of a sexualized culture and the objectification and hypersexualization of women and children, with high prevalence of violent and degrading pornography as a way of learning about sexuality for youth, particularly boys.<sup>32,33</sup>
- Mass media that promotes and normalizes violence,<sup>34</sup> and exposes viewers to sexually explicit materials.<sup>35</sup>
- Societal structures and practices that condone and enable sexual violence to occur, particularly in male-dominated environments<sup>36</sup> (e.g., sexist peer and organizational cultures, institutional and cultural support for sexual harassment or weak sanctions against it.)<sup>37</sup>
- Treating sexual violence as either natural and therefore unavoidable, or as taboo and a private matter.<sup>38</sup>
- Apathy about actively discussing or addressing sexual violence (e.g., by denying personal responsibility for sexual violence prevention).
- Placing the responsibility for avoiding sexual victimization on potential survivors rather than perpetrators (e.g., teaching people how not to get sexually victimized rather than how not to victimize sexually).
- Downplaying, trivializing, or justifying sexual violence,<sup>39</sup> especially through victim-blaming,<sup>40</sup> also known as “rape culture,”<sup>41</sup> and perpetuating sexual violence myths (e.g., false reporting, stranger danger, typical sexual violence victim, and “asking for it”).<sup>42</sup>
- Absence or weak enforcement of sexual violence prevention policies in institutions and systems.<sup>43</sup> For example, Hockey Canada planned to use its Equity Fund to settle claims of sexual misconduct by players,<sup>44</sup> thus condoning and promoting sexual violence in sports.

The next section makes a case to bring sexual violence prevention on par with domestic violence prevention in terms of its prominence on the governments and IMPACT’s agendas, public visibility, and investment.

## **2.0 The case for focusing on sexual violence prevention**

It is essential to prioritize sexual violence prevention on par with domestic violence prevention because sexual violence is still often seen as a normal part of life. It is the **only** violent crime not declining in Canada, which has devastating impacts on individuals, families, communities, and society. Furthermore, sexual violence disproportionately affects women, Indigenous Peoples, and equity deserving groups, exacerbating their human rights and socio-economic and political outcomes.

### **2.1 We must address the widespread tolerance of sexual violence**

Despite some progress in awareness raising and education on sexual violence, there are still many gaps in public understanding of sexual violence, which leads to its widespread tolerance in Canada and Alberta. While it is beyond the scope of this report to challenge all the sexual violence myths, below are some of the most prevalent examples that normalize sexual violence, accompanied by facts that refute them:

- **Myth:** Survivors are responsible for the sexual violence they are subjected to because of how they dress, behave, and socialize; whom they trust and accompany; whether they make the decision to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, or consume alcohol; etc.<sup>45</sup>

**Fact:** Survivors are never responsible for their victimization. It is always the choice of the perpetrator to exploit the circumstances and victimize.<sup>46</sup>
- **Myth:** Sexual violence is committed by strangers (i.e., the so-called stranger danger paradigm),<sup>47</sup> usually in dark and dangerous public spaces.<sup>48</sup>

**Fact:** Survivors know the perpetrator in about 82% of sexual assaults, where acquaintances, friends, and dating, common-law, or married partners often commit the offence.<sup>49</sup> Most instances of sexual violence take place in a private residence.<sup>50</sup>
- **Myth:** If people know one another and are in a relationship, it is not sexual violence because consent can be assumed or implied within intimate relationships.<sup>51</sup>

**Fact:** Within any relationship, consent must be explicit, ongoing, clearly, and freely communicated, and can be freely withdrawn at any point. Consent is a “yes” rather than the absence of a “no”. Physiological responses, such as arousal, are not consent.<sup>52</sup>
- **Myth:** Sexual violence only happens if brute force is used, and if physical harm is inflicted.<sup>53</sup>

**Fact:** Any non-consensual sexual activity is sexual violence, including activity that does not involve physical contact (e.g., stalking, or non-consensual sharing of intimate images).<sup>54</sup>
- **Myth:** If survivors do not resist physically, are not visibly shaken by victimization, or cannot remember details of the victimization, they have not been victimized and must be lying.<sup>55</sup>

**Fact:** Shock and fear for personal safety often prevent victimized individuals from putting up resistance. Instead, they can freeze and be unable to move or speak. All survivors respond differently. Some may be emotional or angry while others may be numb and dazed, revealing no outside signs of their trauma and distress. Additionally, survivors may have difficulty remembering details of the victimization due to shock, fear, embarrassment, distress, or coping with trauma by trying to forget the incident.<sup>56</sup>
- **Myth:** Survivors make false accusations of sexual violence for personal gain (e.g., to get attention, exert revenge, make money, get custody of children in a divorce, or simply because they regret having sex.)<sup>57</sup>

**Fact:** The number of false reports of sexual violence is very low, ranging from 2% to 10%,<sup>58</sup> and is consistent with the number of false reports for other crimes in Canada.<sup>59</sup>
- **Myth:** If the survivor does not report sexual violence to police, or takes too long to report it, it has not happened and they must be lying.<sup>60,61</sup>

**Fact:** Reporting victimization and engaging with the legal system can be a traumatic experience that may result in revictimization, which may dissuade many survivors from reporting crimes. Additionally, survivors may worry about not being believed or being blamed for their victimization; they may think there is not enough evidence and they will not be able to prove their victimization; they may feel embarrassed or ashamed; they may be afraid of the perpetrator or of dealing with the law enforcement, especially if they belong

to an equity deserving group; or they may be pressured by their social networks not to reveal their victimization to protect the perpetrator or the community.<sup>62</sup> As a result, fewer than one-in-ten victims report sexual violence to the police.<sup>63</sup> For many survivors, it takes a long time and a change in circumstances to be able to disclose their victimization.<sup>64</sup>

- **Myth:** Heterosexual boys and men do not get sexually victimized.<sup>65</sup>  
**Fact:** Anyone can be sexually victimized. In fact, in Alberta, boys accounted for 24% of child sexual abuse victims.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, in Canada, 32% of male postsecondary students<sup>67</sup> and 31% of male military college students<sup>68</sup> have experienced unwanted sexual behaviours, and 17% of men have been targeted with unwanted sexual behaviour in the workplace.<sup>69</sup> While most sexual violence is committed by men, women also perpetrate it against other women, children, and men.<sup>70</sup>
- **Myth:** Sexual violence is committed by men who are abnormal perverts.<sup>71</sup>
- **Fact:** Sexual violence perpetrators are ordinary individuals from all educational, occupational, ethno-racial, and cultural backgrounds, and are predominantly, although not exclusively, men.<sup>72</sup> Child sexual abuse is often perpetrated by other children and youth<sup>73</sup> in an estimated 25-50% of all cases, especially in the digital realm.<sup>74</sup>

## 2.2 We must curb the high prevalence and persistence of sexual violence

Widespread tolerance of sexual violence contributes to its prevalence as a social problem and the reality that it is the only violent crime in Canada that is not declining.<sup>75</sup>

- Overall, 30% of women and 8% of men over the age of 15 have experienced *sexual assault*.<sup>76</sup>
- In the workplace, 29% of women and 17% of men experienced *inappropriate sexual behaviour* while in postsecondary institutions 45% of women and 32% of men experienced it.<sup>77</sup>
- Many individuals have experienced *unwanted sexual behaviour in public*: 32% of women and 13% of men have reported unwanted sexual attention or physical contact.<sup>78</sup>
- While researchers have only recently started collecting data on rates of *technology facilitated violence*, it seems to be a prevalent problem, especially after the pandemic transferred much of work and leisure activities into the digital space. Among adults, 11% of women have received unwanted sexually suggestive or explicit images or messages online; 4% have been pressured to send, share, or post sexually suggestive or explicit images or messages; and 2% have been threatened that intimate or sexually explicit images of them would be posted or shared online without their consent.<sup>79</sup>
- *Online child sexual exploitation and abuse* increased from 50 to 131 per 100,000 between 2014 and 2020, with child luring accounting for most incidents.<sup>80</sup>

Sexual violence prevention is particularly urgent in Alberta. Among the provinces, Alberta has the second highest rate of sexual assault against women.<sup>81</sup> Sexual abuse impacted 45% of Albertans, which means that almost one in every two adult Albertans has experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime. Childhood sexual abuse impacted 32% of Albertans, 44% of girls and 24% of boys, while sexual assault impacted 28% of adults.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, women in Calgary have experienced the

second highest rates of unwanted sexual behaviour in public among large Canadian metropolitan areas.<sup>83</sup>

It is important to note that these numbers may not reflect the real scope of the problem. Research suggests that actual rates of sexual violence are much higher than those reported to the authorities or the police. For example, in 2018, only 6% of survivors had reported sexual assault to the police.<sup>84</sup> Like sexual violence itself, underreporting stems from the normalization of violence and gender and socio-economic inequalities. In particular, the prevalence of and societal support for sexual violence myths deters survivors from reporting violence to the authorities or even disclosing it to family and friends.

## **2.3 We must prevent the severe negative impact of sexual violence**

The effects of sexual violence are damaging for individuals, families, communities, and society as a whole.

On the individual level, sexual violence severely affects survivors, who experience adverse psychological and behavioural effects such as PTSD, depression, and suicidal ideation.<sup>85</sup> For example, 28% of women and 11% of men who have experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public have become more fearful.<sup>86</sup> Survivors are also prone to physical health issues, including chronic and acute sexual and reproductive, gastrointestinal, and cardiovascular health problems.<sup>87</sup> Sexual violence is also linked to survivors developing negative coping behaviours, such as substance use.<sup>88</sup> For example, among women who have been sexually assaulted in the workplace, 20% have relied on drugs or alcohol to cope with their victimization.<sup>89</sup>

On the level of interpersonal relationships and community participation, the effects of sexual violence are similarly negative and disruptive. Survivors may struggle to maintain and form new personal relationships and fully participate in school, work, and social settings. For example, 52% of women and 46% of men who have experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in public have changed their behaviour by avoiding certain people, situations, or places.<sup>90</sup> Among those who have experienced harassment online, 17% of women and 12% of men have limited their Internet use or social media participation, while 4% of women and 3% of men have shut down or deleted an account entirely.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, sexual violence trauma may impact a survivor's ability to focus on study and work, negatively affecting their academic performance<sup>92</sup> and diminishing their earning power, thereby causing long-term financial hardships.<sup>93</sup> For example, among women sexually assaulted in a workplace context, 43% have reported difficulties doing their work while 41% have reported missing work or working fewer hours.<sup>94</sup>

Sexual violence affects not only survivors, their families, and social networks, but also communities and society as a whole through reduced productivity and social participation. Furthermore, the financial burden of violence is high. According to Canada's Justice Department, sexual violence offences cost the criminal justice system, social services, and employers approximately \$200 million annually in addition to the costs of medical services, lost productivity, and survivors' pain, which add up to \$4.8 billion.<sup>95</sup>

## 2.4 We must uphold women's, Indigenous Peoples', and equity deserving groups' right to safety from violence

Sexual violence is a violation of the human right to safety and integrity, whose impacts affect survivors' ability to enjoy other rights. It is particularly problematic that women, Indigenous Peoples, and equity deserving groups are more likely to experience sexual violence due to structural and systemic discrimination because sexual violence further entrenches their marginalization.

Women, Indigenous Peoples, and equity deserving groups are more often targeted by all forms of sexual violence:

Women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, youth, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities disproportionately experience *sexual assault*.<sup>96</sup>

- Women and girls are 5.5 times more likely to suffer family-related sexual offences than men and boys.<sup>97</sup>
- Compared to 33% of non-Indigenous women, 46% of Indigenous women have experienced sexual assault in their lifetime.<sup>98</sup>
- Compared to their heterosexual counterparts, bisexual women are three times more likely to be assaulted (34% vs. 11%), while gay and bisexual men are five times more likely to be assaulted (10% vs. 2%).<sup>99</sup> Women from 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are also more likely to experience more severe types of sexual assault compared to heterosexual women.<sup>100</sup>
- Women with disabilities experience more sexual violence than women without disabilities. Compared to 6% of women without disabilities, 15% of women with disabilities have been forced to have sex with their partner. Furthermore, compared to 5% of women without disabilities, 13% of women with disabilities have been forced to perform sex acts that they have not wanted to perform.<sup>101</sup>

Similarly, women, youth, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities are more often subjected to *inappropriate sexualized behaviours at work*<sup>102</sup> and *unwanted sexual behaviours in public*.<sup>103</sup> Indigenous Peoples and single women are also more likely to be affected by unwanted sexual behaviours in public.<sup>104</sup>

Young women are more likely to be *sex trafficked*. For example, among the cases of police-reported incidents of sex trafficking, 95% were women and girls, and among them, 28% were under the age of 18, while 43% were aged 18-24 years.<sup>105</sup> As with in-person victimization, *technology facilitated sexual violence* also primarily affects women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, people with disabilities, and single women.<sup>106</sup>

Experience of sexual violence further worsens these groups' socio-economic, political, and cultural outcomes, and further marginalizes them.

The next section outlines the recommendations that the Government of Alberta and the anti-violence sector can implement to prevent sexual violence in Alberta.

### 3.0 Recommendations for preventing sexual violence

Recommendations are organized by levers of change or outcome areas that are expected to advance sexual violence prevention. The levers of change are:

1. Promoting public understanding of sexual violence and capacity for sexual violence prevention.
2. Promoting social norms of safety and equality, and helping Albertans build healthy and respectful relationships.
3. Creating protective environments that foster safety and equity everywhere people learn, work, worship, play, and congregate.
4. Empowering equity deserving groups to thrive and enjoy safety from sexual violence.
5. Engaging boys and men as co-beneficiaries of safety and equality.
6. Leveraging data and research for sexual violence prevention.
7. Implementing preventative laws and policy.

Individual sections below provide the rationale for each lever of change and examples of results we may want to pursue in the short, medium, and long term to prevent sexual violence. Expected results contain distinct examples rather than a coherent results chain. It is important to emphasize that real, sustainable change is only possible if all levers of change are addressed in a comprehensive, holistic manner. For example, while improving people's understanding of sexual violence will not prevent sexual violence on its own, awareness-raising, and public education are essential blocks of primary prevention efforts upon which systemic and institutional changes will build.

#### 3.1 Lever of change 1: Promote public understanding of sexual violence and capacity for prevention

**Rationale:** To prevent sexual violence, all Albertans must understand what it is, why it happens, who perpetrates it, who is disproportionately victimized, in what situations it occurs, what impacts it has on individuals, families, communities, and society as a whole, and what we can do to stop it. It is particularly important to ensure that Albertans understand the connections among the systems of oppression, gender and socio-economic inequalities, and sexual violence so that they can participate in changing the structures and systems that create opportunities for perpetrators to commit sexual violence.

##### **Expected results:**

##### **Short-term:**

- Albertans demonstrate increased awareness and understanding of sexual violence.
- Albertans demonstrate increased willingness to personally participate in sexual violence prevention efforts.

##### **Intermediate:**

- Albertans, including boys and men, actively participate in primary prevention efforts.

- Albertans, including boys and men, exhibit behaviours that contribute to primary prevention of sexual violence.

#### **Long-term:**

- Albertans report increased safety from sexual violence.

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **Establish:**

- **A sexual violence prevention innovation fund** to improve research and evaluation, expand best practices, enhance technology use for sexual violence prevention, and to support various organizations implementing creative initiatives, especially for equity deserving groups.<sup>107</sup>
- **A creative engagement fund** for artists to develop projects on issues related to sexual violence and gender and socio-economic inequality.<sup>108</sup>

##### **Design and implement:**

- A provincial **audit of sexual violence prevention initiatives, including sexual violence awareness and education campaigns and programs** to support coordinated sexual violence prevention education across the province.<sup>109</sup>

##### **Fund:**

- **AASAS** work to prevent violence through policy and community engagement. This includes developing community-based, culturally appropriate educational resources and public education campaigns.<sup>110</sup> This also involves capacity building for various sectors, relevant professionals, frontline workers,<sup>111</sup> as well as non-specialists to implement effective prevention as part of their work. An example of this work is human resources educating students and staff on sexual violence prevention on campus and in the workplace.<sup>112</sup>
- Education campaigns and initiatives that build **public understanding of sexual violence**, its root causes, drivers, and contributing factors; types of sexual violence, including technology facilitated violence as the most rapidly developing form of sexual violence;<sup>113,114</sup> groups most often victimized sexually across the lifespan; impacts of victimization on survivors, their social networks, communities, and society as a whole; and warning signs of sexual violence perpetration, linking privilege and oppression to sexual violence, emphasizing the experiences of equity deserving groups, and focusing on environments most often exploited for victimization.<sup>115, 116</sup> Prioritize the initiatives that change the discourse around sexual violence from punitive to preventative approaches.<sup>117</sup> Initiatives must be disseminated through a variety of media, in multiple languages,<sup>118</sup> and engage audiences in creative, non-antagonizing manners, calling people in, rather than calling them out or using shock tactics.<sup>119</sup>
- Education campaigns and initiatives that raise **public awareness of sexual violence and its prevention in Alberta**. For example, highlighting prevalence rates, provincial prevention and response legislation and policy, and resources and opportunities to engage potential allies.<sup>120</sup>



- Education campaigns and initiatives that **contribute to preventing sex trafficking**. For example, education campaigns about the non-coercive and coercive tactics used for sexual exploitation;<sup>121</sup> books, films, and other creative outputs with preventative messages; and financial support for those at risk of being trafficked, namely children from low-income single-parent households and Indigenous children and youth from low-income households.<sup>122</sup>
- Education campaigns and initiatives that build **public capacity to intervene safely** before sexual violence happens, cultivating bystander skills and abilities.<sup>123,124</sup>
- Initiatives that **train leaders and mentors** for sexual violence prevention, especially in settings rife with sexual violence perpetration, such as hypermasculine domains, organizations, and institutions.<sup>125,126</sup>
- Events and activities that **can elevate the profile of Sexual Violence Awareness Month** in Alberta.<sup>127,128</sup>

#### **Mandate:**

- Local authorities, especially in rural and remote communities, to initiate and support **local sexual violence prevention projects**.<sup>129</sup>
- **Capacity building and other initiatives for all professionals working with people**,<sup>130</sup> including educators, healthcare professionals, service providers, police officers, the judiciary, civil servants, etc. on sexual violence, the factors and environments that create opportunities for sexual victimization of women and equity deserving groups, their own position of power and authority, and how they can contribute to sexual violence prevention through their work.<sup>131,132,133</sup>

### **3.2 Lever of change 2: Promote social norms of safety and equity, and help Albertans build healthy, respectful relationships**

**Rationale:** The culture of perpetration, or the attitudes, behaviours, and norms that support and perpetuate the conditions that make sexual violence thinkable and doable, is based on the normalization of violence and inequality, including in families, intimate relationships, and among friends, peers, and community members. Inequality and the abuse of power and control give rise to sexual violence in these relationships because perpetrators consider others, especially youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, and equity deserving groups, inferior and deserving of sexual violence. This becomes a means of establishing and reasserting control and domination. Therefore, to prevent sexual violence, it is essential to challenge the culture of perpetration by reinforcing social norms that promote empathy, respect, and equality in all relationships, and by empowering all people to build safe, healthy, and egalitarian relationships in all settings, especially in relationships with youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, and equity deserving groups, who are most often targeted by sexual violence.

#### **Expected results:**

##### **Short-term:**

- Albertans demonstrate positive attitudes to gender and socio-economic equality.

- Albertans understand how to build and maintain safe, healthy, respectful, and egalitarian relationships in their families, with friends and peers, in organizations, and communities.
- Albertans are motivated to promote safe, healthy, and egalitarian relationships in their families, with friends and peers, in organizations, and communities.

#### **Intermediate:**

- Albertans enact safe, healthy, respectful, and egalitarian behaviours and practices in all relationships.
- Albertans demonstrate bystander behaviours against gender and socio-economic inequality.
- Government policy supports initiatives that promote healthy social norms and relationships.

#### **Long-term:**

- All Albertans, including youth, women, and equity deserving groups, experience safe, healthy, respectful, and equitable relationships.

#### **Recommendations:**

##### **Fund:**

- Initiatives that **promote a bystander approach to gender inequality, empathy, and non-violence**,<sup>134</sup> and a **whole-of-society approach** to sexual violence prevention, involving all groups and sectors in its prevention.<sup>135</sup>
- Behaviour change campaigns that **teach the public clear standards for safe, healthy, respectful, and egalitarian behaviours and practices in intimate, domestic, personal, and professional relationships**, including caregivers of children, seniors, and people with disabilities.<sup>136</sup>
- Initiatives that **challenge the attitudes, stereotypes, and behaviours** that drive or condone sexual violence. For example, identify those that devalue women and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals; promote male domination and control; normalize men's sexual entitlement; reinforce rigid gender roles and stereotypes; prioritize family integrity and privacy over members' safety; and promote tolerance, justification or trivialization of violence, including through sexual violence myths and victim blaming.<sup>137,138,139,140</sup> A particular focus should be on initiatives that build respect for and trust in sexual violence survivors.<sup>141</sup>
- Initiatives that **monitor and proactively address backlash and resistance** to gender equality, healthy norms and behaviours, and sexual violence prevention programs and activities across all sectors and organizations.<sup>142</sup>
- Initiatives that **educate the public about the impact of the sexualization of culture on sexual violence**<sup>143</sup> and build public capacity to identify and challenge objectification and sexualization in mass media, advertising, entertainment, and sports industries, including the mechanisms for making a complaint.<sup>144</sup>
- Initiatives and creative outputs, such as short films, theatre plays, and other entertainment products that build capacity around **respectful relationships and healthy sexuality**.<sup>145</sup> Topics should include informed consent, bodily autonomy, communication, intimacy and mutual appreciation, respect and compassion, healthy body image, sexual jealousy, and controlling behaviours<sup>146</sup> for all ages.<sup>147,148</sup>

- Initiatives that **design and test innovative means** to promote healthy relationships and prevent dating and intimate-partner sexual violence in schools and communities.<sup>149</sup>

**Mandate:**

- Provincial mass media, advertising, entertainment, and sports industries to **promote positive media representations** of women and equity deserving groups, and **eliminate the objectification and sexualization** of children, women, and equity deserving groups.<sup>150,151,152</sup>
- All educational institutions from preschool to postsecondary to include **respectful relationships curricula** and **comprehensive sex and sexual violence education**,<sup>153</sup> and build staff capacity to teach this.<sup>154</sup>

**Encourage:**

- **Provincial mass media and entertainment industries to improve the quality of sexual violence coverage** and the representation of women experiencing violence. For example, fund capacity building for journalists on the representation of sexual violence; fund initiatives that support survivors to work with the media; and establish provincial media awards to recognize excellence in reporting and contributing to sexual violence prevention, as is the case for family violence reporting awards.<sup>155</sup>

### **3.3 Lever of change 3: Change structures and systems to create safe and equitable environments**

**Rationale:** Environments, including policies, practices, and infrastructure, shape people's attitudes and behaviours. For example, explicit measures such as institutional social inclusion policies influence people's treatment of equity deserving groups, while public transit infrastructure influences women's safety when using it. In addition to explicit policies and practices, implicit institutional cultures, e.g., tolerance of inequality and misogyny, are often an even stronger predictor of people's behaviours. Therefore, to prevent sexual violence, it is essential to change our structures and systems to create protective environments in all settings where people learn, work, worship, play, and congregate. We must ensure that all policies, practices, infrastructure, institutions, and systems create conditions that promote safety and deprive potential perpetrators of opportunities to abuse others.

**Expected results:**

**Short-term:**

- Alberta parents and caregivers understand how to create a calm, safe, and nurturing caregiving environment.
- Policymakers and frontline service providers have the capacity to prevent violence through professional activities.
- Alberta cultural, religious, and sports organizations are motivated to improve social inclusion, equity, and safety policies, procedures, and practices.

**Intermediate:**

- Alberta educational institutions from preschool to postsecondary implement innovative measures to reduce the risks of sexual violence, including by children and youth against their peers.
- Alberta employers, including those in hypermasculine domains, adopt proactive policies and strategies to foster equitable and safe working environments.
- Healthcare services, including sexual, reproductive, and mental health care, are accessible, affordable, appropriate, and adequate.
- All systems, institutions, and organizations in Alberta adopt equity, social inclusion, and safety policies, procedures, and practices, as well as accountability frameworks for sexual violence prevention.
- The Government of Alberta establishes partnerships with the federal government and national and international partners to increase people's safety from technology facilitated violence.

**Long-term:**

- Alberta educational institutions are free from exploitation, abuse, and violence.
- Women and equity deserving groups live in safe housing and have appropriate wrap-around supports.
- Albertans are protected from adverse weather events and manmade disasters.
- Public spaces, including in rural and remote areas, foster equity and safety, including for equity deserving groups.

**Recommendations:**

**N.B.** For clarity, recommendations are organized based on the context to which they apply: families, educational institutions, workplaces, communities, healthcare institutions, cultural, religious, and sports institutions, law enforcement and provincial corrections institutions, and digital spaces.

### **3.3.1 Foster safe and equitable environments in families**

**Rationale:** Much of sexual violence, especially against children, happens in families. Therefore, it is important to increase the ability of our systems and institutions to support families, including partners, parents, caregivers, and relatives to meet their basic needs, reconcile their various responsibilities, establish and maintain healthy and respectful relationships, and promote harmony and peace.

**Design and implement:**

- A **provincial parenting strategy** that integrates best practices and outlines specific protective measures for various families, including those whose members are more likely to be sexually victimized (e.g., low-income families, families affected by addictions and mental health issues, families living with seniors and members with disabilities). Through this, identify measures for work-life balance, poverty reduction,<sup>156</sup> access to healthcare, childcare, etc., and expand evidence-based positive parenting initiatives and programs.<sup>157</sup>

- A **Family Safety Framework** to ensure that families whose members are more likely to be sexually victimized receive structured and systematic services through collaborating agencies to create comprehensive, wrap-around supports.<sup>158</sup>

#### **Fund:**

- Programs to **support new parents and caregivers** through capacity building, peer support, professional advice, and financial means to help cope with their new responsibilities.<sup>159</sup>
- Initiatives for adolescent parents that **promote positive parenting**, taking into account the challenges and strengths of adolescent parenthood.<sup>160</sup>
- **Strengthen Alberta's home visitation program** capacity to prevent sexual violence through new evidence-based strategies for screening and building healthy parent/child relationships.<sup>161</sup>
- Initiatives that raise awareness of and provide universal access to the **Triple P Positive Parenting Program** and other similar programs.<sup>162</sup>
- Education campaigns and initiatives teaching parents and caregivers how to **model healthy relationships** and **discuss healthy sexuality and sexual violence** with their children.<sup>163</sup>
- Initiatives for parents and caregivers on how to **prevent technology facilitated sexual violence** against their children, the risks of sharing their children's images and information online, and how to minimize children's exposure to degrading and violent sexual materials online.<sup>164</sup>
- Initiatives that **connect parents and caregivers of children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours with professionals** who can educate them on healthy sexual development and build parenting skills tailored to their socio-cultural backgrounds.<sup>165</sup>

### **3.3.2 Foster safe and equitable environments in educational institutions**

**Rationale:** Educational institutions have a dual responsibility. First, they must ensure that students and staff are safe from sexual violence when in school. Second, they must teach students to build safe and equitable relationships and to prevent sexual violence in their peer groups and communities.

#### **Design and implement:**

- A **Safe Schools Framework** for all educational institutions from preschool to postgraduate to promote the value of diversity; increase child and youth safety and wellbeing; build administration, staff, and student capacity to demonstrate safe, healthy, empathetic, respectful, and egalitarian behaviours; and maintain safe and supportive learning environments by eliminating bullying, harassment, violence, abuse, and neglect.<sup>166</sup>
- A **child protection curriculum** in schools to help educators implement a whole-of-school approach to child protection.<sup>167</sup>
- **Mandatory social and emotional learning and respectful relationships education** that includes empathy, mindfulness, emotion and conflict management, addictions, decision-making, goal setting, communication, boundary setting, diversity and equity, and civic participation.<sup>168</sup> As well, integrate a **comprehensive sex and sexual violence education** program into provincial curricula and syllabi across the entire educational cycle.<sup>169,170</sup>

- **Training materials and workshops for educators** to understand the root causes and drivers of sexual violence and how to contribute to their elimination.<sup>171</sup>
- **Professional regulation and standards of practice** for all educators on sexual misconduct and abuse.

**Update the curricula** to ensure that children and youth across the educational cycle understand the root causes and drivers of gender inequality and sexual violence and have the capacity to practice safe, healthy, empathetic, respectful, and egalitarian relationships.<sup>172</sup>

#### **Mandate:**

- All childcare facilities to implement **protocols and procedures** to ensure children's safety from sexual abuse, and fund capacity building for childcare providers to identify children at risk and ensure their safety.<sup>173</sup>
- All educational institutions to implement **policies and procedures against sexual violence** and to regularly evaluate their effectiveness.<sup>174</sup>
- All educational institutions from preschool to postsecondary to adopt a **whole-of-school approach** to respectful relationships, healthy sexuality, and sexual violence prevention, involving staff, parents and caregivers, students, and community agencies.<sup>175</sup>
- All educational institutions to strengthen the **design and delivery of respectful relationship programs**, incorporating respectful relationships education into the provincial curricula and syllabi.<sup>176,177</sup>
- All educational institutions to offer **interactive workshops on gender equity**, gender roles, and the link between gender inequity and sexual violence.<sup>178</sup>
- All postsecondary institutions to deliver **compulsory consent education programs** for all staff, faculty, and students within the first eight weeks of each new academic year.<sup>179</sup>
- All postsecondary institutions to implement **initiatives that prevent sexual violence on campus**. This includes legally-binding, standardized anti-sexual violence and anti-harassment policies; compulsory education on consent and sexual violence; campus alcohol policies; trainings and initiatives for members of fraternities and athletes; mandatory public disclosure of all statistics on sexual violence on campuses and initiatives underway to prevent it; mandatory Mental Health Commission of Canada's mental health first aid course for faculty members, employees, and campus police.<sup>180</sup>

#### **Fund:**

- Educator capacity building to **deliver child protection, social and emotional learning, and respectful relationships, as well as comprehensive sexual education curricula** and offer teaching packages to all schools.<sup>181</sup>
- Initiatives that help educational institutions to **create safe and inclusive environments** for all students, especially from equity deserving groups.

### 3.3.3 Foster safe and equitable environments in the workplace

**Rationale:** Employers and employees have the responsibility to ensure a safe working environment for all. Workplace policies, practices, and infrastructure must eliminate opportunities for potential perpetrators to victimize coworkers sexually, customers, or service providers. Prevention efforts must be particularly concerted and strenuous in male-dominated and hypermasculine environments, where the risks of sexual violence perpetration are higher.

#### **Design and implement:**

- An **enhanced Code of Practice for employers** to help create safer workplaces for all employees.<sup>182</sup>
- A **Respectful Treatment at Work Guideline** for employers and encourage employee trainings.<sup>183</sup>
- An **accreditation system** based on monitoring organizational cultures, practices, and procedures, to recognize workplaces that create and maintain safe workplaces for all, including for equity deserving groups.<sup>184</sup>

**Establish a highly trained special enforcement team of inspectors** to audit workplace policies and procedures and guide the implementation of sexual violence prevention measures across the province.<sup>185</sup>

**Ensure representation of equity deserving groups** on Occupational Health and Safety committees.

#### **Mandate all workplaces to:**

- **Introduce or strengthen workplace sexual harassment and sexual violence policies and procedures**, train all staff, and establish a monitoring and evaluation system.<sup>186</sup>
- Implement a **Mental Health Strategy** that supports employees' mental health and contributes to preventing sexual violence.<sup>187</sup>
- Introduce a **Remote and Isolated Work Policy suite** to ensure the safety of individuals working in remote or isolated settings, including youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples around remote work sites.<sup>188</sup>

**Mandate trainings for all management and staff in the hospitality sector** to prevent sexual violence against employees and patrons as the hospitality sector offers ample opportunities for victimization.<sup>189</sup>

#### **Fund:**

- Initiatives that **raise awareness and increase the effectiveness of sexual harassment prevention** in workplaces, especially in male-dominated and hypermasculine occupations.<sup>190</sup>
- Initiatives that create **educational materials, learning opportunities, and knowledge exchanges** for employers and employees to create and maintain safer work environments, especially by promoting gender and socio-economic equality.<sup>191</sup>



- Community and work-based initiatives that work with employers to help **create positive and equitable workplace cultures**<sup>192</sup> and improve work health and safety for women and equity deserving groups, with the focus on practical solutions.<sup>193</sup>
- **Capacity building for workplaces**, including all management and staff, on gender and socio-economic equality, empathy, and sexual violence prevention in the workplace.<sup>194</sup>

### 3.3.4 Foster safe and equitable environments in communities

**Rationale:** Community poverty, fragmentation, and high rates of community violence create favourable conditions for perpetrators to exploit these conditions and sexually victimize others. Therefore, it is important to invest in community resilience initiatives, ensure access to basic needs, and foster cohesion and harmony to deter perpetrators from targeting poor and isolated individuals.

#### Fund:

- Community education campaigns and initiatives that **promote gender and socio-economic equality**, social inclusion, healthy relationships, and zero tolerance for sexual violence,<sup>195</sup> including by explicitly identifying gender and socio-economic inequality as drivers of sexual violence.<sup>196,197</sup>
- Community-based **bystander education campaigns and initiatives** regarding everyone's responsibility for sexual violence prevention, how to recognize the warning signs of sexual violence perpetration, and how to intervene safely.<sup>198</sup>
- **Sexual violence prevention champions groups and community advocates**,<sup>199</sup> especially in communities at risk, such as rural and remote communities, to guide cultural change and implement initiatives<sup>200</sup> (e.g., sexual violence forums,<sup>201</sup> marches and rallies in support of survivors,<sup>202</sup> and initiatives that address the backlash against gender and socio-economic equality and healthy sexuality.<sup>203</sup>)
- Initiatives that **work with gang members and children and youth at risk of joining gangs** to prevent radicalization to violence, as they tend to perpetrate sexual violence.<sup>204</sup>
- Initiatives that **offer safe housing** for youth, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, people with disabilities, homeless people, and seniors.<sup>205</sup>
- Government programs that provide meaningful financial assistance to single women and single parents and caregivers to **buy homes**.<sup>206</sup>
- Initiatives that promote **age-friendly communities** that help seniors live safely in their existing housing.<sup>207</sup>
- Initiatives for **adverse weather events prevention**, such as floods, fires, and heatwaves, that disrupt people's lives and create opportunities for sexual violence perpetration.<sup>208</sup>
- Initiatives that raise awareness about the use of alcohol and other substances for sexual violence perpetration and seek to **reduce alcohol and substance abuse**.<sup>209</sup>

#### Mandate:

- The emergency management sector to **embed a framework for primary prevention of sexual violence in disaster management** and build staff capacity.<sup>210</sup>

### 3.3.5 Foster safe and equitable environments in healthcare institutions

**Rationale:** Healthcare institutions have a dual responsibility. First, they must create safe conditions for all patients and staff. Second, they must provide affordable, accessible, adequate, and appropriate health services that will ensure people can lead healthy lives free from violence. Responsive healthcare can eliminate conditions and situations that perpetrators exploit to commit violence. For example, healthcare settings can offer mental health counselling to men experiencing high stress in relationships and provide quality sexual and reproductive healthcare to allow partners to make safe and healthy sexual and reproductive choices.

**Align the existing health policies,** plans, programs, and projects with sexual violence prevention, by integrating gender and socio-economic equality into healthcare accountability frameworks.<sup>211</sup>

#### **Design and implement:**

- A provincial **Women's Health Policy and Action Plan** to support health reform for more gender-responsive care.<sup>212</sup>
- A **provincial Sexual and Reproductive Health and Safety from Sexual Violence Policy and Action Plan**,<sup>213,214</sup> including measures to protect patients receiving sexual and reproductive healthcare from sexual violence.
- Education campaigns teaching the public about **patient rights and healthcare provider responsibilities** to ensure patients understand what sexual violence is and how to recognize the warning signs of sexual violence perpetration.

#### **Fund:**

- **Affordable and appropriate sexual and reproductive health services**, especially for equity deserving groups and residents of rural communities.<sup>215,216</sup>
- Initiatives that advise the public on **planned parenthood options and reproductive and maternal health services** (pre-natal and post-natal care, counselling, and parenting support), particularly for residents of rural and remote communities.<sup>217,218</sup>
- Initiatives for pregnant women and families with small children to address **mental health, addictions**, and prevent family violence.<sup>219</sup>
- **Free/affordable and appropriate mental health services**.<sup>220</sup>
- Initiatives that increase access to **healthy, affordable food, promote healthy eating practices, and mainstream positive body image**.<sup>221</sup>

Mandate all healthcare institutions to **implement strengthened sexual violence prevention policies and procedures**, ensure capacity building for all management and staff, introduce a monitoring and evaluation system for sexual violence prevention initiatives, and report annually on the safety of the healthcare system to the public.

### 3.3.6 Foster safe and equitable environments in cultural, religious, and sports organizations

**Rationale:** Some cultural, religious, and sports organizations are characterized by hierarchical structures and significant power inequalities. Additionally, some cultural, religious, and sports practices create opportunities for power abuse. Examples of opportune situations include children's

religious camps or sports teams' away games, during which adults may choose to victimize children and youth in their care, or children and youth may sexually victimize their peers. It is important to ensure that organizational norms, policies, practices, and infrastructure guarantee safety for all and that organizational leaders actively promote respect and equity.

#### **Establish:**

- A provincial **Interfaith Committee on Promoting Equity and Safety**, which would include a working group on sexual violence prevention.
- A provincial **Sport Safety Committee** to advise the government on safe sport in Alberta.

#### **Design and implement:**

- A cross-sectoral strategy to inform the public and relevant stakeholders of the risks and legal implications of **female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and honour-related violence**.<sup>222</sup>
- The **Ethics in Sport Framework** to foster inclusive, safe, and respectful sporting environments for all, including equity deserving groups.<sup>223</sup>
- A provincial **code of conduct for sports organizations** with funding stipulations and checks and balances to improve safe sport standards.

#### **Mandate:**

- All sport organizations to **introduce and enhance sporting codes** that promote safety, equity, and respect in sport; train all management and participants; and monitor and evaluate progress on safety and equity with regular updates for the public.<sup>224</sup>

#### **Fund:**

- Initiatives that build the capacity of management and staff to **implement basic rules for safety** (e.g., open doors policy in child serving organizations; privacy rules for bathing and undressing) and **offer safety-enhancing infrastructural projects** (e.g., upgrading play areas to increase observability; installing additional lighting).<sup>225</sup>
- Initiatives that promote **sports participation and leadership** of women and equity deserving groups by improving policies and practices against sexual violence<sup>226</sup> and by removing concrete barriers to participation (e.g., exclusionary facilities, locations, timetables).<sup>227</sup>
- Initiatives that build the **capacity of cultural community and religious leaders** to prevent sexual violence.<sup>228</sup>

### **3.3.7 Foster safe and equitable environments in law enforcement and provincial correctional institutions**

**Rationale:** Law enforcement and criminal justice are male-dominated and hypermasculine occupations. It is important to ensure that professionals in these areas treat people they serve with respect and guarantee their safety from violence. Professionals also need to eliminate structural and systemic conditions that give perpetrators opportunities to inflict sexual violence. Training these professionals in gender and socio-economic equality and sexual violence prevention will also have positive effects on their families and peer groups.

**Reform the criminal legal system** to transition to restorative and alternative approaches to justice. This will reduce the number of inmates in provincial correctional institutions and prevent exposure to violence and entrenchment in the criminal lifestyle.<sup>229</sup>

Mandate **compulsory trainings** on gender equality, social inclusion, and sexual violence for law enforcement, judiciary, and all legal professionals.<sup>230</sup>

Mandate all law enforcement institutions and provincial correctional institutions to implement policies and practices to **prevent sexual violence in law enforcement and corrections**.<sup>231</sup>

### 3.3.8 Foster safe and equitable environments in public spaces

**Rationale:** It is important to design safe and equitable public spaces where everyone, especially women, Indigenous Peoples, and equity deserving groups, feel safe and where perpetrators cannot exploit infrastructural or policy deficiencies to commit sexual violence.

#### Design and implement:

- Policies and initiatives that reduce access to **alcohol and other substances** that are used to perpetrate sexual violence (e.g., alcohol and cannabis outlet density and proximity of alcohol outlets to campuses).<sup>232</sup>
- A **Safety Audit for Public Places and Public Events** toolkit and training.<sup>233</sup>

#### Fund:

- Education campaigns and initiatives that **promote equality, social inclusion, and safety in public spaces** to prevent sexual violence (e.g., bystander approach to harassment in the street and social marketing on public transit).<sup>234</sup>
- Initiatives that **design accessible, age-friendly, inclusive, and safe public places**,<sup>235</sup> and eradicate secluded or private areas<sup>236</sup> (e.g., through better infrastructure, lighting, and accessibility).<sup>237</sup>
- Initiatives that **build the capacity of professionals to contribute to sexual abuse prevention** through their roles (e.g., security guards, park maintenance employees, swimming pool supervisors, and staff at twenty-four-hour fast-food outlets).<sup>238</sup>
- Initiatives that **improve natural surveillance of public places** through lighting and increased visibility, or **CCTV surveillance** in places such as playgrounds, shopping centres, swimming areas, and public amenities.<sup>239</sup>
- Initiatives that **increase the safety of public transit** (e.g., through better technology use, modernized infrastructure, the Request Stop program, staff training, promoting bystander behaviours against sexual harassment, and safety audits).<sup>240, 241, 242</sup>

#### Mandate:

- Local governments to design and implement policies and procedures to **improve public safety** at live music events, festivals, creative industries, and licensed venues.<sup>243</sup>

### 3.3.9 Foster protective environments in digital spaces

**Rationale:** Since we rely upon technology and digital spaces for many of our needs and interactions, perpetrators are increasingly exploiting this dependence for sexual victimization. Therefore, it is important to build public understanding of how perpetrators can leverage technology for sexual violence, and work across sectors to make technology and the digital realm safer by fostering respectful and equitable practices among all users.

#### Design and implement:

- A comprehensive **website** with sexual violence prevention information, including information and resources for equity deserving groups and those at risk of committing sexual violence.<sup>244</sup>
- An **online platform, an app, and workshops for parents and caregivers** on safety from technology facilitated sexual violence for their children.<sup>245,246</sup>
- A **dashboard** with sexual violence data that tracks and reports Alberta data to support research, analysis, policy development, and program design.<sup>247</sup>

#### Mandate:

- All educational institutions to implement **school-based online safety frameworks**<sup>248</sup> and deliver **trainings on technological and digital safety** for staff.<sup>249</sup>
- All educational institutions to implement **curricula and education on digital literacy and digital citizenship**, integrated across the entire educational cycle. This should include empathy and respect online and in technology facilitated communications; online critical thinking and decision-making skills; acceptable, unacceptable, and criminal behaviours online; the impact of pornography, sexualization, and sexist norms on gender equality and relations; and safe ways to adopt a bystander approach.<sup>250,251</sup>
- Provincial technology and digital service providers to implement **E-safety models or increased controls** to prevent children and youth accessing violent and degrading sexually explicit material.<sup>252</sup>

#### Fund:

- Information campaigns **on safety from technology facilitated sexual violence**,<sup>253</sup> including on the impacts and consequences of distributing intimate material.<sup>254</sup>
- Grant programs for youth and community organizations to develop and deliver **local initiatives to prevent technology facilitated sexual violence**.<sup>255</sup>
- Initiatives that raise awareness and teach the public to **prevent online child sexual exploitation and abuse**, directed at schools, community groups, and service providers working with children and youth.<sup>256</sup>
- Initiatives that **promote positive masculinity in online and technology facilitated interactions and spaces**,<sup>257</sup> challenging online and technology facilitated rape culture myths and toxic masculinity expressions,<sup>258</sup> focusing particularly on the “manosphere,”<sup>259</sup> which a collection of men’s rights activists, anti-feminists, pickup artists, alt-right groups, incels, and other individuals who hold discriminatory views.

### **3.4 Lever of change 4: Change structures and systems to eliminate opportunities for perpetrators to victimize equity deserving groups sexually**

**Rationale:** Equity deserving groups, including children and youth, racialized groups, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, people with disabilities, and seniors, among others, are more likely to be discriminated against, socially excluded, and victimized, including sexually. One main reason for this is our society's inadequate efforts to eliminate conditions that allow others to exploit, abuse, and victimize. Experiences of sexual violence infringe upon these groups' human rights and further marginalize them due to ensuing poor socio-economic outcomes. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government, the anti-violence sector, and society overall to implement special measures that address the ways in which structural and systemic inequalities can be exploited by sexual violence perpetrators, and to increase these groups' social inclusion and safety from sexual violence.

#### **Expected results:**

##### **Short-term:**

- Children and youth demonstrate positive attitudes towards gender and socio-economic equality.
- Religious leaders are motivated to promote sexual violence prevention and equitable gender and social relationships in their communities.
- Frontline workers understand the ways in which structural and systemic inequalities can be exploited by sexual violence perpetrators and are motivated to create conditions to protect specific equity deserving groups from sexual violence.

##### **Intermediate:**

- Institutional policies reflect the ways in which structural and systemic inequalities can be exploited by sexual violence perpetrators as well as the strengths, needs, and preferences related to safety from sexual violence for all specific equity deserving groups and outline concrete measures for addressing them.
- Adequate funding is allocated for housing and healthcare needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, people with disabilities, unhoused people, and seniors, including comprehensive wrap-around services.
- Government adopts targeted measures to prevent violence against groups who are often marginalized and more likely to be targeted by sexual violence perpetration. This includes people with addictions and mental health issues, female gang members, sex workers, etc.

##### **Long-term:**

- Equity deserving groups enjoy the same quality of life as all other Albertans.
- All Albertans recognize and respect human dignity of equity deserving groups.

#### **Recommendations:**

**N.B.** For clarity, recommendations are organized based on the group to which they apply: children and youth, racialized and religious equity deserving groups, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, people with disabilities, and seniors.

### 3.4.1 Change structures and systems to prevent victimization of children and youth

**Rationale:** It is important to understand child and youth experiences of sexual victimization and to eliminate opportunities for adults or peers to victimize. By ensuring that child and youth needs are being met, perpetrators cannot exploit their need for care, supervision, or goods for sexual victimization. It is also vital to ensure that children and youth are committed to and capable of building safe and healthy relationships with peers.

**Fund:**

- Provincial **surveys of child and youth attitudes toward and experience of** sexual violence.<sup>260</sup>
- **Safe and confidential spaces for children and youth** to address their worries about their own sexual thoughts or behaviour (e.g., sexual attraction to younger children or siblings.)<sup>261</sup>
- Initiatives that **build gender and socially equitable norms, behaviours, and practices** among children and youth<sup>262</sup> and foster **healthy relationships**, including safe and healthy peer cultures.<sup>263</sup>
- Initiatives that **build and expand supportive family, peer, and community connections** that reduce the risk of sexual violence for children and youth.<sup>264</sup>
- Education campaigns and initiatives with information and resources on how to **prevent dating and other forms of sexual violence in adolescence**<sup>265</sup> and how to **intervene safely** in situations of gender or social discrimination among peers.<sup>266</sup>
- Initiatives that build the capacity of adults, such as parents, caregivers, educators, coaches, to **discuss the link between gender and social inequality and sexual violence** with children and youth,<sup>267</sup> and to **model the culture of gender equality and social inclusion**<sup>268</sup> and **respectful relationships** for children and youth.<sup>269</sup>
- Initiatives that build the capacity of leaders and staff of children and youth-serving organizations to **recognize power differences and unhealthy dynamics among the children and youth** they work with to prevent abusive and harmful sexual behaviours.<sup>270</sup>
- Initiatives that build the capacity of adults to **adopt a bystander approach to inappropriate or harmful behaviours by children and youth against their peers** in communities or organizations.<sup>271</sup>
- An **authoritative and engaging website** with comprehensive, age-appropriate, and culturally sensitive resources on sexual abuse, sexual health, and sexual activity for children and youth to make respectful and empowered sexual and relationship choices.<sup>272,273</sup>
- A **communication strategy and practical guide for influencers and role models** to engage children and youth on healthy relationships, choice, respect, and pornography.<sup>274</sup>
- An education campaign and initiatives to promote **healthy body image, body confidence, and self-esteem** among children and youth, especially girls, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and children and youth with disabilities, as a measure against sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>275,276</sup>
- Initiatives that improve **child and youth sexual and reproductive health** using evidence informed programs and policies.<sup>277</sup>
- **Free contraception** for those under the age of 21, living in poverty, and affected by homelessness.<sup>278</sup>



- Grant programs for children and youth organizations to develop and deliver **local initiatives to prevent technology facilitated sexual violence**.<sup>279</sup>
- Initiatives that raise awareness of and teach the public to **prevent online child sexual exploitation**, directed at schools, community groups, and service providers working with children and youth.<sup>280</sup>
- **Specialized treatment programs for children and youth** prone to harmful sexual behaviours that reflect: 1) modern norms around child and youth sexual exploration and self-expression (e.g., the normalization of consensual sexting); 2) child and youth sexual agency and decision-making capacity; and 3) the rights and needs of children and youth who are sexually abused by other children, as well as children and youth who exhibit harmful sexual behaviours.<sup>281</sup>

#### **Mandate:**

- All educational institutions from preschool to postsecondary to include **mandatory respectful relationships curricula** and build staff capacity to teach.<sup>282</sup>
- All educational institutions from preschool to postsecondary to include **mandatory comprehensive sex education**, including age-appropriate ideas about sexual abuse, consent, pleasure, communication, mutual appreciation, intimacy, respect, compassion, bodily autonomy, healthy body image, and gender equality.<sup>283</sup>
- **Curricula and education on digital literacy and digital citizenship** across the entire educational cycle. This should include empathy and respect online and in technology facilitated communications; online critical thinking and decision-making skills; acceptable, unacceptable, and criminal behaviours online; the impact of pornography, sexualization, and sexist norms on gender equality and relations; and safe ways to adopt a bystander approach.<sup>284, 285</sup>

### **3.4.2 Change structures and systems to prevent victimization of racialized and religious equity deserving groups**

**Rationale:** Some racialized, religious, and immigrant communities may uphold highly unequal power dynamics and practices or even normalize sexual victimization, as in the case of child marriage practiced in some religious communities. Additionally, members of such communities may be isolated because of racism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia, which perpetrators can exploit for targeting them. Therefore, it is important to support these groups to create norms and practices that increase the safety of their members and ensure that systems and institutions support these groups' equity to promote positive socio-economic and political outcomes.

#### **Fund:**

- Culturally appropriate, community-wide **education campaigns**<sup>286</sup> for ethno-specific, multicultural, and faith-based communities, **culturally appropriate awareness materials** in multiple languages,<sup>287</sup> and **prevention initiatives**.<sup>288</sup> These materials should focus on the root causes, structural, and systemic conditions that can be exploited to perpetrate sexual violence, and the warning signs, manifestations, and impacts of sexual violence in specific communities, and how to prevent it.

- Newcomer-serving organizations to develop trauma-informed **initiatives for immigrants from conflict and war-affected countries** on healing, empathy, equity, safety, and sexual violence prevention.<sup>289</sup>

**Organize a coalition with ethno-cultural and religious community leaders** willing to champion sexual violence prevention in their community, build their capacity, and support their initiatives.<sup>290</sup>

**Coordinate the establishment of clubs and groups for racialized and ethno-cultural communities** to reduce social isolation, foster support networks, and fund their activities.<sup>291</sup>

### 3.4.3 Change structures and systems to prevent victimization of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities

**Rationale:** Perpetrators may exploit structural and systemic weaknesses, such as homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic practices, and the lack of appropriate services to victimize 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. It is important to strengthen institutional policies and practices to close the gaps that make such exploitation possible.

#### Fund:

- Education campaigns and initiatives aimed at the general public to **prevent sexual violence against 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals**, focusing particularly on youth and transgender individuals.<sup>292</sup>
- Community-wide **education campaigns** for specific groups within the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities on the root causes, structural, and systemic conditions that can be exploited to perpetrate sexual violence, as well as the warning signs, manifestations, and impacts of sexual violence in specific communities, and how to prevent it.<sup>293</sup>
- Initiatives that **test and evaluate community-based primary prevention programs and activities** against sexual violence in 2SLGBTQIA+ communities to build evidence of what works.<sup>294</sup>
- **Affordable and appropriate sexual health services** for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.<sup>295</sup>
- **Safe housing initiatives** for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.<sup>296</sup>

#### Mandate:

- All institutions to **implement or strengthen 2SLGBTQIA+ equity policy and practices**.
- **Capacity building for frontline service providers** in all sectors on the specific needs and structural and systemic conditions around 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals that can be exploited to perpetrate sexual violence.<sup>297</sup>

### 3.4.4 Change structures and systems to prevent victimization of people with disabilities

**Rationale:** Our society systematically overlooks the rights of people with disabilities, including their right to safe, healthy, and enjoyable sexuality. It is important to ensure that people with disabilities have all their needs met and that all organizations serving them can guarantee their safety from sexual victimization.

**Fund:**

- **Sexuality education initiatives** for people with disabilities and information campaigns for families of children with disabilities, focused on their children's sexuality.<sup>298</sup>
- **Safe housing initiatives** for people with disabilities<sup>299</sup> and safe and adequate **care services** for people who need support to live independently, ensuring care providers are carefully vetted and trained on sexual violence prevention.<sup>300</sup>
- **Affordable and appropriate sexual health services** for people with disabilities.<sup>301</sup>

**Mandate:**

- **Capacity building for frontline service providers** in all sectors on the specific needs and structural and systemic conditions around people living with a disability that can be exploited to perpetrate sexual violence.<sup>302</sup>
- **All disability serving organizations and institutions to implement strengthened sexual violence prevention policies and procedures**, ensure capacity building for all management and staff, introduce a monitoring and evaluation system for sexual violence prevention initiatives, and report on the safety of the disability serving sector of the healthcare system to the public annually.

### 3.4.5 Change structures and systems to prevent victimization of seniors

**Rationale:** Systemic discrimination often results in seniors' poverty, poor health, and isolation, which perpetrators exploit to victimize sexually. As with other equity deserving groups, it is essential to guarantee safe and adequate conditions and services for seniors and build caregivers' capacity to provide safe and respectful care.

**Fund:**

- Education campaigns about seniors' needs and how to meet them, while **treating seniors with dignity and respect** and protecting them from sexual violence.<sup>303</sup>
- Community-wide **education campaigns and initiatives** on the root causes, structural and systemic conditions that can be exploited to perpetrate sexual violence against seniors, the warning signs, manifestations, and impacts of sexual violence on various age groups, and seniors living in various situations (e.g., independently in rural communities, in long-term care, with children) and how to prevent it.<sup>304,305</sup>
- Initiatives to **protect seniors from sexual violence in long-term care** (e.g., fund long-term care infrastructure that allows privacy; mandate care homes to implement better vetting procedures for staff, strengthen protocols that reduce the risk of sexual violence, and increase staffing levels; and fund capacity building).<sup>306</sup>
- Initiatives that promote **age-friendly communities** that help seniors to live safely in their existing housing.<sup>307</sup>
- **Affordable and appropriate sexual health services** for seniors.<sup>308</sup>

**Mandate all seniors serving organizations and institutions to implement strengthened sexual violence prevention policies and procedures**, ensure capacity building for all management and staff, introduce a monitoring and evaluation system for sexual violence prevention initiatives, and report on the safety of the disability serving sector healthcare system to the public annually.

Coordinate the establishment of **clubs and groups for seniors** to reduce social isolation and foster support networks and fund their activities.<sup>309</sup>

### 3.5 Lever of change 5: Engaging boys and men as co-beneficiaries of safety and equality

**Rationale:** It is only possible to prevent sexual violence if boys and men fully embrace and practice equity and safety for everyone. Therefore, it is essential that boys and men have the necessary skills and motivation to build safe, healthy, empathetic, respectful, and equitable relationships; engage with their peers and communities to promote safety from sexual violence; and actively participate in addressing the potential backlash against equity and anti-violence work. Investing in boys and men as co-beneficiaries creates a safer and more equitable society and reduces the price of raising perpetrators, who incur exorbitant costs in the healthcare and criminal justice systems and offset social progress for survivors and all Canadians.

#### Expected results:

##### **Short-term:**

- Prominent Albertan boys and men are motivated to act as Male Champions of Change.
- Albertan boys and men are willing to intervene safely when their peers support inequitable and violent norms and behaviours.

##### **Intermediate:**

- Albertan boys and men enact healthy masculinities in all their relationships and interactions.
- Albertan boys and men choose not to participate in alt-right, men's rights, and pro-violence movements and online communities that support sexual violence.

##### **Long-term:**

- Boys and men enjoy health and well-being, including good mental health and life satisfaction.

#### Recommendations:

##### **Design and implement:**

- A strategy to **prevent radicalization to sexual violence**, including in the online space, with a focus on the incel culture and alt-right movements.<sup>310</sup>

##### **Fund:**

- Trials and initiatives that **use a behavioural insights lens** to eliminate the root causes and drivers of sexual violence, including gender stereotypes, problematic peer pressure, unconscious bias, youth gangs, etc., among boys and men.<sup>311</sup>
- Initiatives that actively engage men and boys, including high-profile influencers and celebrities,<sup>312</sup> to **promote gender and social equality and sexual violence prevention**, e.g., by using influencers, sports celebrities, and other role models to speak against sexual violence in schools and in children's and youth organizations,<sup>313</sup> or male youth to youth social media campaigns featuring a prevention message,<sup>314</sup> especially targeting rural areas.<sup>315, 316</sup>

- Initiatives by grassroots organizations to **promote healthier masculinities and social connections across groups** for men and boys.<sup>317</sup>
- Initiatives that **increase boys' and men's capacity to build and maintain respectful relationships**,<sup>318</sup> including initiatives that **target problematic male peer relations** that emphasize aggression and disrespect towards women, and train men to **stand up against sexist speech and behaviour**.<sup>319</sup>
- Initiatives that **target boys and men at risk of using sexual violence**, such as those in alt-right movements, to support their healing and reintegration.<sup>320</sup>
- Initiatives that **teach digital literacy for sexual violence prevention**<sup>321</sup> and **promote positive masculinity in online and technology facilitated interactions and spaces**.<sup>322</sup> These should challenge online, and technology facilitated rape culture myths and toxic masculinity expressions,<sup>323</sup> focusing particularly on the “manosphere”<sup>324</sup> (a collection of men's rights activists, anti-feminists, pickup artists, alt-right groups, incels, and other individuals who hold discriminatory views).
- Initiatives that address the impact of **pervasive pornography use** and promote positive, healthy behaviours in children and youth negotiating sexual relationships.<sup>325,326</sup>
- A provincial **Men's Telephone Counselling and Referral Service** to support callers facing relationship challenges, dealing with fathering issues, or going through separation and divorce.<sup>327</sup> This should also include support to counsel men at risk of committing sexual violence who want to change their behaviour.<sup>328</sup>
- **Male Champions of Change** through which influential men form a high-profile coalition to promote gender equality and healthy sexuality in their communities.<sup>329</sup>

#### **Mandate:**

- Trainings for sportsmen, coaches, military personnel, police and **other hypermasculine occupations** on sexual violence prevention, respectful relationships, non-violent dispute resolution, and gender equality.<sup>330</sup>

### **3.6 Lever of change 6: Leverage data and research for sexual violence prevention**

**Rationale:** There are still many gaps in our understanding of sexual violence, best practices for its prevention, and the scale of violence in Alberta. Therefore, it is important to undertake further research and base policy development and program design on comprehensive and accurate data. Additionally, it is highly recommended to invest in new technology for more comprehensive and high-quality data collection, and to leverage the predictive potential of data to prevent sexual violence.

#### **Expected results:**

##### **Short-term:**

- The government and anti-violence sector have the capacity to use technology for quality data collection on sexual violence.

### Intermediate:

- Alberta legislation, policy, and programs are based on accurate data and recent research findings.
- Government allocates funding for innovative research, testing, and monitoring and evaluation of sexual violence prevention initiatives.

### Long-term:

- Innovative technology and data increase personal and community security from sexual violence.

### Recommendations:

#### Design and implement:

- An **outcomes framework** connecting all sexual violence prevention initiatives to ensure that all efforts contribute to meaningful outcomes.<sup>331</sup>
- A more **robust data collection and analysis system** on sexual violence to use for predictive analysis and policy development, focusing particularly on equity deserving groups and groups most often targeted by sexual violence.<sup>332</sup>
- An interactive comprehensive **dashboard with sexual violence data**.<sup>333</sup>
- Regular provincial **surveys on sexual violence and abuse prevalence** to compare data with police-reported data,<sup>334</sup> **personal safety surveys**<sup>335</sup> and **attitudes and behaviours surveys** related to sexual violence.<sup>336</sup>
- Regular **audits of government and institutional sexual violence prevention policies and programs** (e.g., provincial policy as well as policies and procedures in educational institutions, workplaces, and human service providing institutions) to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.<sup>337</sup>
- A **Gender Equality Barometer** measuring gender attitudes and outcomes in the province.<sup>338</sup>

Produce and widely disseminate **annual reports with provincial statistics on sexual violence** and its prevention.<sup>339</sup>

#### Fund:

- Research on **sexual violence issues** in Alberta, including the **experiences of sexual violence of Alberta's equity deserving groups**;<sup>340</sup> **environments and occupations with high rates of sexual violence** (e.g., the military, corrections, and massage parlours<sup>341</sup>); and **male victims of sexual violence**,<sup>342</sup> to understand why and when individuals use sexual violence and how to prevent its perpetration.<sup>343</sup> Share the findings with relevant government, institutional, and community stakeholders.<sup>344</sup>
- Research on **online safety from sexual violence** and **leveraging technology for prevention**.<sup>345</sup>
- Multi-sectoral initiatives that **enhance the sharing of data and information** among various agencies and service providers with a role in sexual violence prevention.<sup>346</sup>

### 3.7 Lever of change 7: Implement preventive laws and policies

**Rationale:** While laws and policies do not guarantee the elimination of sexual violence, they are an important prevention tool. The most vital strategy for legislation and policy reforms is to focus on upstream prevention rather than on punitive approaches. Therefore, rather than relying exclusively on harsh punishment for perpetrators as a deterrent, pertinent laws and policies need to focus on creating and fostering protective environments in all places where Albertans naturally congregate.

#### Expected results:

##### **Short-term:**

- Policymakers understand what policy and legislation reforms can contribute to sexual violence prevention.
- The anti-violence sector has the capacity to advocate for legislation that promotes protective environments in all places where Albertans naturally congregate.

##### **Intermediate:**

- Albertans mobilize for legislation and policy reforms that promote equity and safety for all, including equity deserving groups.
- Government proactively monitors and evaluates all legislation and policy for negative impacts on equity and safety and amends problematic laws and policies.

##### **Long-term:**

- Alberta legislation and policy uphold equity and safety for all, including equity deserving groups, and offer concrete measures and funding allocations to create protective environments where Albertans learn, work, and play.

#### Recommendations:

##### **Review and strengthen:**

- **Provincial legislation** against sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, on campus, in housing, and public places to ensure they are appropriate and reflective of best practices for prevention.<sup>347,348</sup>
- **Tenancy laws and policies** to strengthen tenants' protection from violence by landlords, roommates, and strangers.<sup>349</sup>

##### **Adopt legislation to:**

- Stipulate **equal funding** for the criminal legal system responses to sexual violence and for **community-based prevention efforts** focused on environmental change.<sup>350</sup>
- Require all educational institutions to **adopt campus-wide sexual violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment prevention policies and plans**, which will be reviewed regularly with input from staff and students.<sup>351</sup>
- Require all healthcare, childcare, and other human services organizations and institutions, including those working with equity deserving groups, to **adopt system-wide sexual**



**violence, sexual assault, and sexual harassment prevention policies and plans**, which will be reviewed regularly with input from staff and service users.

- Require all mass media, advertising, and public spaces to monitor and **remove any stereotypical, sexist, pornographic, and offensive images and messages.**<sup>352</sup>

Introduce policy strategies and plans that **address the drivers of sexual violence**, such as poverty and discrimination, and allocate stable funding for initiatives that increase access to economic security, sexual, reproductive, and mental healthcare, and culturally appropriate family support services.<sup>353</sup>

**Mandate** municipalities and rural communities to develop and implement **sexual violence prevention legislation, policy, and action plans.**<sup>354</sup>

## 4.0 Conclusion

It is essential to organize primary prevention efforts that specifically target the drivers of sexual violence. While many of the measures must be implemented together with more general measures for preventing both domestic and sexual violence, it is important to establish specific policies and governance structures and allocate targeted funding for sexual violence prevention. Efforts to create safer and more equitable environments for all must focus on societal norms change; legislative reforms; enhanced safety and health in all public systems (e.g., education, the labour market, healthcare, housing, and criminal justice); the use of data, research, and technology to inform policy, programming, and innovation; and substantial supports for families and communities. When planning sexual violence prevention, it is paramount to prioritize the safety of those most often targeted by sexual violence—children, youth, and equity deserving groups—and to engage boys and men as co-beneficiaries. Additionally, because of the sensitive nature of the topic, it is important to design initiatives to monitor and address potential backlash against prevention efforts.

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