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THE PROJECT TO END
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**ADVANCING GENDER
EQUALITY IN ALBERTA: A
CRITICAL STRATEGY TO
PREVENT GENDER-BASED
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 is part of a series of research briefs designed to inform the Alberta Primary Prevention Framework Collaborative (APPF), whose goal is to help the Government of Alberta (GoA) and the IMPACT collective identify strategies and actions that are focused on primary prevention of domestic and sexual violence. We have developed three submissions specifically for the GoA to address the root causes of domestic and sexual violence: 1) one on [decolonization and Indigenous Sovereignty](#),¹ 2) another one on [advancing social inclusion](#)² and 3) the report that follows on developing a gender equality plan. These three reports should be read together as they are interrelated and are all necessary to move upstream to prevent violence before it starts.

This report focuses on helping the GoA understand how gender inequality drives gender-based violence (GBV) and how advancing gender equality is a primary prevention strategy. It also provides 15 evidence-based strategies and 84 actions for the government to implement that will lead to the prevention of GBV. The report is based on a review of 290 documents with recommendations from 70 Canadian policy actors such as think tanks, policy institutes, and non-profits working on gender equality and violence prevention. It synthesizes a comprehensive suite of recommendations in strategic priority areas that will move the needle on gender equality.

At the same time, there are several limitations to this report. Since many of the policy documents reviewed address the federal government, recommendations tend to be pragmatic rather than truly transformative. In other words, they focus on reducing suffering rather than transforming our current systems to support people to thrive. Additionally, many of the recommendations are not new or innovative since they reiterate the measures for which activists have been advocating for decades, such as pay equity, safe workplace conditions, and free quality childcare. While some progress has been achieved on advancing some of these recommendations, including by the GoA, many recommendations are still pertinent, especially for women and equity-deserving groups.

Finally, you will notice our overall recommendations in this report are lacking an in-depth intersectional analysis, as we focused on equity-deserving women (e.g., women from racialized groups; 2SLGBTQIA+ communities; unhoused people; people with disabilities; seniors; and residents of rural and remote communities) in our [social inclusion report](#)³ and Indigenous Peoples in the [Strong Women's Circle](#)⁴ report. Thus, we strongly encourage the GoA to implement the three suites of recommendations simultaneously to ensure better results for all Albertans. More importantly, we encourage the GoA to take these reports and consult with Albertan women and equity-deserving groups and Indigenous Peoples to prioritize and fine tune the recommendations to ensure they reflect people's lived experiences, needs, and preferences here and now.

Despite the above-mentioned limitations of the report, we believe that the enclosed recommendations are an important step for the government to take as we start addressing the root causes of gender-based violence by advancing gender equality.

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1.0 Introduction

This report is part of a series of research briefs* designed to inform the Alberta Primary Prevention Framework Collaborative (APPF), whose goal is to help the Government of Alberta (GoA) and the IMPACT collective identify policies, strategies, and actions focused on advancing primary prevention efforts to stop domestic and sexual violence before they start.

While we know the root causes of these forms of violence are complex, research has consistently shown that a lack of gender equality is an underlying driver of violence against women and girls.⁵ Therefore, achieving gender equality must be a key goal for those aiming to reduce and prevent gendered violence.⁶ In this report, instead of “domestic and sexual violence,” we use the term “gender-based violence” (GBV), which is violence that people experience because of their gender, gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender.⁷ This use aligns with the new [National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence](#),⁸ which we hope the GoA will adopt provincially. In fact, building on the previous efforts of the former Alberta Ministry of Culture, Multiculturalism, and Status of Women, we have developed this report to support the GoA’s implementation of the plan in accordance with Alberta’s contextual priorities.

The following report articulates a case for focusing our efforts on advancing gender equality as a primary prevention strategy to stop GBV before it happens. After explaining primary prevention, the report provides data on the prevalence of GBV in Canada and Alberta to demonstrate that it is a large-scale social problem. Then, the report traces GBV primarily to the normalization of violence and inequality and unequal power relations, all rooted in various systems of oppression. It then offers suggestions for what an Alberta plan focused on gender equality could include. We urge the GoA to prioritize, adopt, and invest in the following gender equality plan to advance primary prevention of GBV.

2.0 What is primary prevention?†

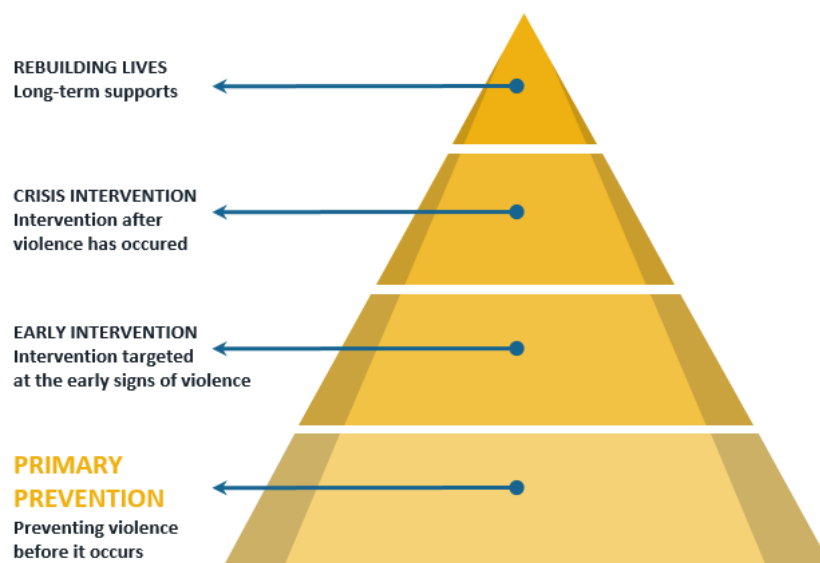
Primary prevention means preventing initial victimization and perpetration of domestic and sexual violence by targeting the structural and cultural conditions that produce and reinforce violence while addressing community and societal risk factors for violence and building protective factors.^{9,10} “If we want to stop producing perpetrators of violence, we must change the structures (i.e., institutions, laws, policies, and practices) and cultures (i.e., beliefs, values, and social norms) that produce them. Primary prevention is long-term social change work that should involve every citizen.”¹¹ Primary

* This research project identified hundreds of recommendations and actions to advance social inclusion. Not to overwhelm the readers, we have selected pragmatic actions for this report. Additional recommendations can be found on [Primary Prevention Playbook website](#) along with the 13 research reports developed to support the APPF collaborative.

† This definition was adapted with permission from various research reports that were written to support the development of the Alberta Primary Prevention Playbook. Please check [Primary Prevention Playbook website](#) for the most recent definition.

prevention is different from other kinds of interventions that address domestic and sexual violence. Interventions that occur when the risk of violence is already there are often called early interventions or secondary prevention. Doing something about domestic and sexual violence that is currently happening (when people are in crisis) is often called response or tertiary prevention. Rebuilding lives is focused on providing long-term supports that enable people who have been harmed to heal and find safety, housing, health, and wellbeing while supporting those who have harmed them to “be accountable, heal, repair, and prevent the transmission of violence across generations.”¹²

Figure 1. The primary prevention pyramid



Promoting and advancing gender equality will change the structural and cultural conditions that produce and reinforce GBV and, therefore, must be a top priority in our primary prevention efforts.

3.0 Why focus on advancing gender equality as a primary prevention strategy?

Gender equality is a state when people of all genders have equal conditions, treatment, and opportunities for realizing their full potential, human rights and dignity, and for contributing to (and benefitting from economic, social, cultural and political development. political development.¹³

Across the globe, countries have increasingly recognized that gender inequality is a human rights violation that results in women’s lower social status, limited power in private and public life, and

restricted access to decision-making and resources. Furthermore, globally, we have come to the realization that gender inequality significantly increases the likelihood of GBV.¹⁴ Research has clearly shown that the higher the indicators of gender inequality in a country, the higher the rates of GBV.¹⁵ Although Canada has implemented a range of measures for gender equality, including as a part of its 2030 Sustainable Development Goals,¹⁶ we have not achieved true gender equality. We still have unequal access to resources and decision-making in private and public life.^{17,18,19} For example, on average, women in Canada earn 89 cents for every dollar that men earn.²⁰ For women who face multiple barriers, including racialized women, Indigenous women, and women with disabilities, the wage gap is much bigger.

Despite evidence to the contrary, many Canadians, especially men, deny that gender inequality exists.²¹ For example, 72% of women and 55% of men agree or strongly agree that there are significant obstacles that make it harder for women to succeed compared to men.²² And unfortunately, Canada does not always do enough to challenge and eliminate such gender-blind attitudes, structures, systems, and institutions that ignore the differences in experiences and needs of different genders.²³ For example, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in reinforcing gender inequality among parents of younger children as mothers assumed a disproportionate share of childcare and government policies did not account for this burden.²⁴

As a result of these inequalities, GBV is still persistent in our communities. Canadian data has shown that:²⁵

- In 2019, women made up 79% of all Canadians who experienced intimate partner violence.
- In 2018, women were significantly more likely than men to experience any form of intimate partner violence, including physical abuse (23% versus 17%), sexual abuse (44% versus 36%), and psychological abuse (43% versus 35%).
- Between 2014 and 2019, 80% of victims of intimate partner homicides were women. During this time, Indigenous women accounted for 21% of all intimate partner femicides, although they only represented about 5% of women in Canada.
- In 2019, rates of family violence against children and youth were significantly higher among girls than boys (379 versus 239 per 100,000), as were rates of sexual offences by a family member (170 versus 37 per 100,000).

In Alberta, the rates and pervasiveness of GBV are also high. For example:

- More than four in 10 women in Alberta have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime.²⁶
- Among the provinces, Alberta has the second highest rate of sexual assault against women.²⁷
- Two in three women and one in two girls in Alberta have experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime.²⁸
- Women and girls in Alberta are two times more likely than men and boys to experience sexual abuse (60% of females compared to 31% of males).²⁹
- In 2020, there were 18 domestic violence deaths in Alberta: 61% were single homicides, 22% were homicide/suicides, and 17% involved multiple homicides.³⁰

- Between 2011 and 2020, there were 165 domestic violence deaths in Alberta: 62% were female and 38% were male.³¹
- Among large Canadian metropolitan areas, women in Calgary have experienced the second highest rates of unwanted sexual behaviour in public.³²

Research has also shown that because of intersecting systemic and structural forms of racism, colonialism, class discrimination, and homo, bi- and transphobia, the prevalence and severity of violence can increase for certain groups of women. For example:

- Racialized women are more likely to have experienced unwanted sexual behaviours in public that make them feel unsafe (35% of racialized versus 33% of non-racialized women).³³
- Compared to 30% of non-Indigenous women, 43% of Indigenous women have been sexually assaulted at least once since age 15.³⁴
- Among unhoused people, while on the street, over 37% of women and 41% of non-binary and trans individuals have experienced sexual assault.³⁵
- One in two (50%) 2SLGBTQIA+ women and one in four (26%) 2SLGBTQIA+ men in Canada have been sexually assaulted since age 15 compared to 30% of heterosexual women and 8% of heterosexual men.³⁶

How is GBV linked to inequality? The following section examines the root causes and drivers of GBV and zeroes in on the role that gender inequality plays.

4.0 Root causes and drivers of GBV

GBV stems from the **systems of oppression**, or social structures that perpetuate inequalities through social norms, laws, policies, and practices. All systems of oppression are based on the idea of superiority and inferiority and promote the relations of domination and subordination, privileging some groups and marginalizing others through differences in status, power, decision-making, and access to resources. The four main systems of oppression at the root of GBV are **heteronormative and cisnormative patriarchy, white supremacy, colonialism, and capitalism**. Heteronormativity is the view that heterosexuality is the normal and preferred sexual orientation, while cisnormativity is the view that a gender identity that matches with biological sex is the normal and preferred gender identity.³⁷ Generally, heteronormative and cisnormative patriarchy privileges heterosexual, cisgender men; white supremacy privileges white Christians; colonialism privileges non-Indigenous settlers from the Global North; and capitalism privileges people with economic power. Each of these systems boosts these groups' status, facilitates their access to power, leaves more decision-making in their hands, and grants them more resources.

While the systems of oppression are somewhat abstract, we can see their manifestations in the drivers of GBV. The drivers include **the normalization of violence, the normalization of inequality, social exclusion, and gender inequality.**[‡]

[‡] Anti-Indigenous discrimination and ongoing colonization are the drivers of violence against Indigenous Peoples. For more details, please see our report [*Strong Women's Circle*](#).

The normalization of violence is the idea that various expressions of violence (verbal aggression, coercion, or control) are acceptable means of advancing one's interests in relationships, families, communities, institutions, and systems. As a result of it, violence permeates our culture, structures, and systems, making it invisible or even justifiable. For example, one in five women in Canada have been blamed for their sexual victimization.³⁸

The normalization of inequality is the idea that humans can be ranked into a socially acceptable hierarchy of groups based on their social identities, with some social groups worthy of higher status, more power, and more control over decision-making and resources. Our society explains away various groups' unequal socio-economic and political outcomes by meritocracy (i.e., the claim that social power and resources are distributed based on one's talent, effort, and achievement rather than privilege and access). In this way, we ignore the historical processes, such as colonialization, exploitation, discrimination, or disenfranchisement that have structured our society into a hierarchy, and we forget that social inequality is not natural but socially constructed. Just as with violence, inequality permeates our culture, structures, and systems. For example, as many Canadians are struggling to adapt to the rising living costs and trying to get creative to meet their nutrition needs,³⁹ Canada's highest-paid CEOs earned an average worker's entire annual salary, \$58,800, by 9:43 a.m. on Jan. 3, the first official workday of the new year.⁴⁰

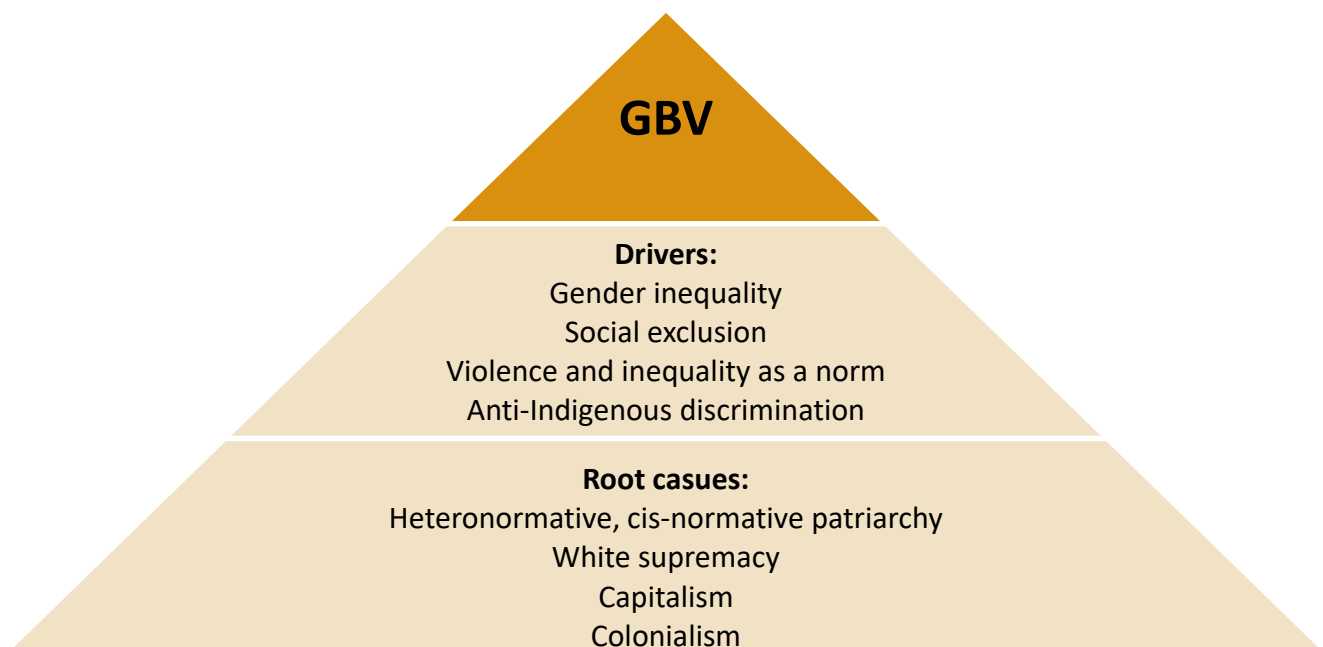
Social exclusion is a state in which certain groups are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political, and cultural life.⁴¹ We can identify social exclusion in the negative outcomes of equity-deserving groups,* who face disproportionate barriers in all systems and institutions because of systemic discrimination, such as racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, ageism, ableism, and classism, among others. As a result, these populations tend to have lower incomes and wealth, to be underrepresented in leadership and management roles, to experience worse health, and to suffer from more frequent and severe forms of violence.⁴²

Gender inequality is a specific way of hierarchically organizing society, where different genders have unequal value and an unequal distribution of power, resources, and opportunities.⁴³ As a result of this hierarchy, men generally enjoy greater status, power, decision-making, and access to resources.⁴⁴ Overall, other genders' outcomes in most systems and institutions lag behind men's outcomes. Men tend to have higher employment rates, including in full-time permanent employment; work in more lucrative fields and occupations; earn more; occupy managerial positions; do significantly less unpaid work in the home; and act as informal and formal leaders, including in communities and politics.⁴⁵ However, among other genders there are also significant gaps based on age, gender identity, sexuality, disability, racialized group, immigration status, and socio-economic status, to name just a

* **Equity-deserving groups** are historically marginalized and underserved groups that include women, immigrants, refugees, ethnically or racially diverse populations, official language minorities, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, individuals with disabilities, female residents living in Northern, rural, and remote communities, homeless populations, sex trade workers, and individuals with low socioeconomic status. (Adapted from West Coast LEAF. (2018). We are here: Women's Experiences of the Barriers to Reporting Sexual Assault. <https://www.westcoastleaf.org/>).

few.⁴⁶ This is because gender inequality and social exclusion work in tandem to shape people's outcomes. It is also important to note that while men benefit from gender inequality in some areas,⁴⁷ they also pay a significant price, especially in terms of their physical and emotional/mental health.⁴⁸ Rigid gender identities, norms, and stereotypes⁴⁹ constrain men's freedom and stifle their thriving. Men are expected to live up to unrealistic expectations of masculinity, such as exceptional physical strength, emotional toughness, and financial success. They face challenges when trying to assume caring roles and occupations, and often feel isolated and incapable of having meaningful, warm relationships with others.⁵⁰ One result, for example, is that men, on average, have higher rates of drug and alcohol addiction than women.⁵¹

Figure 2: The relationship between the root causes, drivers, and GBV



Since, as a society, we see violence and inequality as normal, and since people who have lower status, decision-making power, and access to resources are easier for perpetrators to victimize, it is not surprising that violence against women, Indigenous Peoples, and equity-deserving groups in Canada is prevalent. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the GoA and every Albertan to promote gender equality because it is a human right; it leads to better health and wellbeing for all genders; creates more inclusive, connected, and cohesive communities; provides economic benefits to individuals, families, and the entire society, and prevents GBV and promotes peace and security.⁵²

5.0 Advancing primary prevention through an *Alberta gender equality plan*: Overview

To promote gender equality, we must engage in primary prevention efforts focused on:

- Healing from internalized oppression and privilege that stem from heteronormative patriarchy.
- Addressing cultural ideals of what it means to be a woman, a man, and an individual of any other gender by de-gendering our roles and expectations.
- Promoting policies and practices that respect the needs and preferences of all genders.
- Ensuring that individuals’ and groups’ outcomes in all systems are not shaped by their gender.

Any efforts to address GBV and promote gender equality require strategically engaging with men and boys to understand their vested interests and potential contributions to change.⁵³ Moreover, efforts require an intersectional approach that recognizes all other organized inequalities of status, decision-making, and access to resources besides gender⁵⁴ and takes measures to address them. We want to reiterate that, while we treat women as a seemingly monolithic group in this report, our report on social inclusion offers specific measures for addressing inequalities among women and other genders based on racialized group, 2SLGBTQIA+ status, ability, class, age, and geographic location.

The table below summarizes our suggestions for an *Alberta Gender Equality Plan*. It outlines five strategic priority areas with complimentary goals and 15 tangible strategies that can move the needle on achieving gender equality and stopping GBV.

Table 1: Alberta gender equality plan: Priority areas, goals, and strategies

Priority areas	Goals	Strategies
1. Safety and equity in relationships, institutions, and public spaces	Ensure that women are safe from all forms of violence and free to pursue their goals without fear.	Educate Albertans on the link between gender equality, violence prevention, and colonization and mobilize all citizens for equity, inclusion, and safety.
		Support Albertans to build and maintain safe and equitable relationships in-person and online.
		Build and maintain safe and equitable institutions and public spaces.
2. Health and wellbeing	Ensure all genders have access to physical and mental health supports.	Educate Albertans on the links between gender, colonization, social exclusion, and health.
		Create gender-responsive, safe, and equitable health care services for women.
		Create gender-responsive, safe, and equitable health care services for men and boys.

		Ensure all Albertans have access to essential infrastructure and healthy lifestyles.
3. Economic participation and financial security	Women have access to appropriate employment and income supports to meet their professional aspirations and financial needs and can reconcile their careers with other social roles and responsibilities.	Promote girls' and young women's education for economic participation.
		Improve women's employment and financial prospects through better provisions for a work-life-family balance.
		Increase women's labour market participation and labour desegregation. [§]
		Improve women's financial security.
4. Female representation and leadership	Increase women's representation and leadership in politics, workplaces, institutions, and male-dominated settings.	Create the social conditions that support women's representation and leadership across sectors and industries.
5. Monitor and evaluate impact and change	Collect, measure, and use data to inform continuous quality improvement, innovation, and ongoing research and evaluation regarding achieving gender equality to prevent violence.	Develop data collection and monitoring systems.
		Build the capacity of diverse sectors and organizations to collect data on gender equality.
		Continually evaluate the impact of gender equality policies and investments on the reduction of GBV.

[§] Labour desegregation refers to policies aimed at reducing or eliminating gender segregation in the labour market.

6.0 Moving the gender equality plan to action: Recommendations

This section expands on each priority area by identifying *specific actions* to implement the gender equality plan.*

Priority Area 1: Safety and equity in relationships, institutions, and public spaces

Goal: Ensure that women are safe from all forms of violence and free to pursue their goals without fear

Strategy 1: Educate Albertans on the link between gender equality, colonization, and violence prevention, and mobilize all citizens for equity and safety

Actions:

- Mandate all educational institutions to integrate gender equality in education curricula^{55,56} and implement continuous teacher capacity building regarding gender equality^{57, 58} and preventing GBV.⁵⁹
- Fund initiatives that build Albertans' understanding of gender equality and challenge traditional norms, beliefs, and practices that support gender inequality across settings and sectors,^{60,61,62,63} including through social media and artistic outputs, such as books, films, and theatre plays.⁶⁴
- Fund initiatives that monitor and proactively address potential backlash against gender equality across the province (e.g., social media monitoring and engaging with users; attending protests against gender equality and involving the protestors in safe and healthy conversations, proactively targeting boys and men sympathetic to misogynistic influencers and public figures).⁶⁵

Strategy 2: Support Albertans to build and maintain safe and equitable relationships in person and online

Actions:

- Fund education campaigns and initiatives that build Albertans' capacity to understand, build, and maintain respectful, equitable, safe, and healthy relationships across settings, (e.g., in families, educational institutions, workplaces, communities, and online).^{66,67}

* This research project identified hundreds of recommendations and actions to advance gender equality. Not to overwhelm the readers, we have selected pragmatic actions for this report. Additional recommendations can be found on [Primary Prevention Playbook website](#) along with the 13 research reports developed to support the APPF Policy Collaborative.

- Fund initiatives that promote digital citizenship and build critical media skills, including among boys and men targeted by attempts to radicalize them to violence, to create safe and equitable online environments.^{68,69,70}
- Fund [Shift's provincial strategy to engage Albertan boys and men](#)⁷¹ to help them achieve healthier masculinities and build respectful, equitable, safe, and healthy relationships with girls and women, peers, community, and family members.^{72,73,74}
- Fund initiatives that teach parents how to address children's gendered socialization⁷⁵ and promote gender equality through expectations and actions.^{76,77}
- Fund initiatives that provide expert gender-responsive support for partners and parents going through a divorce or separation and custody disputes,^{78,79} and build divorcing or separating parents' capacity to coparent in a healthy manner.⁸⁰

Strategy 3: Build and maintain safe and equitable institutions and public spaces to reduce GBV

Actions:

- Mandate all institutions and organizations, including educational institutions, workplaces, community, religious, and sports organizations, to implement compulsory:
 - social-emotional learning trainings⁸¹ to teach emotional regulation, empathy, communication, and conflict resolution,⁸² and respectful relationships trainings.⁸³
 - evidence-based and evidence-informed anti-discrimination, anti-bullying, and anti-harassment policies, programs, and support services.⁸⁴
- Fund initiatives that design and promote safer and more inclusive public spaces and public transit (e.g., through infrastructure upgrades, increased accessibility, and safety audits)⁸⁵ to increase women's participation in their communities and social activities.^{86,87,88,89}
- Support municipalities to target geographic communities with high rates of violence by investing in awareness campaigns, community trainings, community forums, film screenings, and hosting discussions with prominent community members.⁹⁰
- Adopt a government policy on language use that promotes gender equality and peace in all government speeches, publications, and materials.^{91,92}
- Adopt policies requiring mass media, entertainment, and advertising industries to promote gender equality, social inclusion, Indigenous sovereignty, and violence prevention⁹³ and to eliminate negative or stereotypical representations, hyper-sexualization, and objectification of women.^{94,95,96}

Priority Area 2: Health and wellbeing for all genders

Goal: Ensure all genders have access to physical and mental health supports

Strategy 4: Educate Albertans on the links between gender, colonization, social inclusion, and health impacts

Actions:

- Fund education campaigns:
 - on gender as a key determinant of health and wellbeing⁹⁷ and on physical and mental health consequences of gender inequality.⁹⁸
 - to increase women's health literacy and promote help-seeking behaviours around health and wellbeing.⁹⁹
 - that challenge unrealistic and unhealthy beauty standards and promote healthy body image and self-esteem for women, men, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.^{100,101}
 - that challenge gender stereotypes about women in sport and showcase women's sports achievements.¹⁰²
 - that raise awareness of domestic and sexual violence experienced by men in heterosexual, same-sex, and gender nonconforming relationships.¹⁰³
- Mandate educational institutions and children- and youth-serving organizations to introduce prevention and harm reduction-based alcohol, drug, and other substance use education,¹⁰⁴ including the impact of substance use on gender inequality and violence.

Strategy 5: Create gender-responsive and safe health care services for women

Actions:

- Fund accessible, affordable, culturally appropriate, and adequate community-based women's health and wellbeing services,¹⁰⁵ including:
 - sexual and reproductive health services;^{106,107}
 - gender-responsive counselling and mental health support services;
 - substance use services;^{108,109,110} and
 - antenatal and perinatal services,¹¹¹ including mental health initiatives for pregnant women and new mothers.¹¹²
- Fund initiatives that provide health services for at-risk and hard-to-reach women, including homeless women, sex workers, female offenders in corrections, etc.¹¹³
- Mandate all health care institutions and professions to implement mandatory capacity building on gender equality, social inclusion, and violence prevention.^{114,115}
- Develop and adopt a provincial women's health strategy, including sections on gender-responsive care.^{116,117}
- Develop and adopt a sexual and reproductive health and maternal, newborn, and child health strategy.^{118,119}

Strategy 6: Create gender-responsive, safe, and equitable health care services for men and boys

Actions:

- Fund initiatives that disseminate targeted preventive health information and advice for boys and men,¹²⁰ raise awareness of health services for men,¹²¹ ensure all boys and men have

access to a family physician¹²² including through mobile clinics¹²³ and workplace outreach programs,¹²⁴ especially in rural areas.¹²⁵

- Fund initiatives that provide sexual and reproductive health counselling and supplies for men and boys.^{126,127}
- Support free online, app-based, and in-person trauma-informed mental health initiatives for men and boys, including socio-emotional learning and anger management courses for boys and men,¹²⁸ and a 24/7 trauma-informed helpline and online chat for boys and men struggling with relationship problems, fathering, divorce and separation, and mental health problems.^{129,130,131}
- Fund Initiatives that support male victims of domestic and sexual violence.¹³²
- Adopt a provincial men's health strategy¹³³ focusing on men's mental health, suicide prevention, harm reduction, and healthy lifestyles,^{134,135,136} including measures to strengthen the men's health sector.¹³⁷

Strategy 7: Ensure Albertans' access to essential infrastructure and healthy lifestyles

Actions:

- Fund initiatives that facilitate women's access to safe, affordable, accessible, and appropriate housing, especially through innovative solutions for women's house ownership,¹³⁸ with a particular focus on women with disabilities and senior women.^{139,140,141}
- Fund initiatives that facilitate Albertans' access to nutritious foods.
- Fund initiatives that facilitate the participation of all women and girls in sport and exercise, for example, by helping sport and recreation groups, associations, and clubs promote gender equality, healthy relationships, and violence prevention.¹⁴²
- Mandate all sports and children- and youth-serving organizations to upgrade sporting infrastructure to meet women's needs,^{143,144} and promote equitable treatment of men and women.¹⁴⁵

Priority Area 3: Economic participation and financial security

Goal: Women have access to appropriate employment and income supports to meet their professional aspirations and financial needs and can reconcile their careers with other social roles and responsibilities

Strategy 8: Promote girls' and young women's education for economic participation

Actions:

- Fund initiatives that reduce gender-segregated education choices by building educators' capacity to reduce differential treatment in the educational system; helping students make non-gendered career choices; providing training in specialized skills; organizing girls' camps;

presenting female role models in male-dominated occupations; and adjusting recruitment materials to reflect women's needs.^{146,147}

- Fund initiatives that teach parents, mentors, and educators to promote girls' and young women's participation in science, technology, engineering, math, and medicine (STEMM) and work with the STEMM sector to promote gender equitable norms, policies, and practices.^{148,149} Provide scholarships for women to study STEMM¹⁵⁰ and other non-traditional occupations.¹⁵¹
- Invest in flexible education opportunities, such as short upskilling courses, apprenticeships, and diplomas to help girls and young women develop marketable skills.¹⁵²
- Create initiatives that support student caregivers to complete their education.¹⁵³
- Mandate all educational institutions to help girls and young women diversify their education and career choices by challenging traditional career stereotypes and steering women towards lucrative male-dominated occupations and industries.¹⁵⁴

Strategy 9: Improve women's employment and financial prospects through better provisions for a work-life-family balance

Actions:

- Fund affordable, accessible, culturally appropriate, and adequate licensed childcare¹⁵⁵ and afterschool care¹⁵⁶ with flexible hours including during the summer and school holidays, especially for low-income and young parents.^{157,158,159}
- Work with workplaces (employers) to:
 - Create and support initiatives that offer balanced workplaces to allow employees to reconcile work, personal wellbeing, and family.^{160,161}
 - Offer all employees flexible working arrangements, such as flexible hours, banked hours, paid and unpaid family leaves, telework, and reduced weekly work schedules, to support employees' health and non-work obligations,¹⁶² adopting a "flexible by default" approach.¹⁶³
 - Adopt family-friendly policies, programs, and practices for working parents and caregivers,¹⁶⁴ offering them flexible work arrangements and all the necessary workplace accommodations (e.g., nursing rooms, changing stations in washrooms, breastfeeding breaks).^{165,166}
 - Introduce proactive policies, programs, and practices to encourage people, especially men, to use flexible working arrangements and parental leave for equitable parenting, caregiving, and domestic responsibilities.¹⁶⁷
 - Learn about the extent and impact of unpaid domestic work, childcare, and caregiving on women's health, career prospects, earnings, etc., and promote women's empowerment in the workplace.¹⁶⁸

Strategy 10: Increase women's labour market participation and desegregation

Actions:

- Mandate workplaces to introduce gender equality into strategic planning,¹⁶⁹ implement regular gender audits to identify whether organizational culture, policies, and practices promote workplace gender equality and women's equal participation, and implement corrective actions focused on equal pay for comparable work; develop strategies for focused recruitment and promotion of women; invest in leadership development and mentoring specifically for women; create flexible workplaces; and support organizational culture to ensure all genders can excel.^{170,171}
- Mandate workplaces to collect and report gender equality data to stakeholders and the public.¹⁷²
- Mandate workplaces to introduce capacity building for management and human resources on addressing unconscious bias in hiring, assigning responsibilities, promotion, and pay negotiations.¹⁷³
- Fund education campaigns and initiatives to challenge work-related stereotypes across sectors¹⁷⁴ and make a business case for gender equality in the labour market.¹⁷⁵
- Create programs to help women and men join non-traditional occupations and industries.^{176,177,178,179}
- Support initiatives that encourage women and stay-at-home parents to establish and grow small businesses¹⁸⁰ and support female entrepreneurs and small business owners¹⁸¹ (e.g., through encouraging investors to support female entrepreneurs,¹⁸² funding initiatives that help women write successful business proposals¹⁸³ and participate in public tenders for public procurement¹⁸⁴).
- Create initiatives that provide practical support for women entering male-dominated occupations¹⁸⁵ and men entering female-dominated occupations¹⁸⁶ (e.g., coaching, mentoring, training, connecting individuals to a community of practice, and other employment services^{187,188}).
- Support initiatives that help employers increase the share of women in management, leadership, and on company boards across sectors¹⁸⁹ (e.g., schemes for shadowing or having lunch-and-learn opportunities with female executives,¹⁹⁰ and leadership development programs for selected female talents from small companies).¹⁹¹
- Support initiatives that quickly train, upskill, or transition women to new roles, especially those returning to work or in precarious employment and financial situations.^{192,193}
- Create awards and celebrations to recognize women and men in non-traditional occupations¹⁹⁴ and employers of choice who promote gender equality, a balanced workplace, and pay equity.^{195,196}

Strategy 11: Improve women’s financial security

Actions:

- Mandate pay equity legislation and strategies for implementation across all sectors.
- Fund regular minimum wage increases¹⁹⁷ and liveable, annually recalculated benefits and income supports for parents, caregivers, low-income individuals and families, people with disabilities, seniors, and other individuals in precarious situations.^{198,199,200}
- Fund initiatives that provide women with free financial counselling services^{201,202} and financial supports.^{203,204}
- Mandate all educational institutions to implement measures to improve girls’ and young women’s financial literacy and planning skills²⁰⁵ and salary negotiation capacity.^{206,207}
- Mandate all workplaces to assess and address gender pay inequity,²⁰⁸ for example, by introducing pay appraisal interviews to provide employees with the right to an annual interview on competence, responsibilities, pay and career development.²⁰⁹
- Mandate and provide better pay in traditionally female-dominated occupations and industries.^{210,211,212}

Priority Area 4: Representation and leadership

Goal: Increase women’s representation and leadership in politics, workplaces, institutions, and male-dominated settings

Strategy 12: Create the social conditions that support women’s representation and leadership across sectors and industries

Actions:

- Fund initiatives that lift women’s visibility as subject matter experts, leaders, and spokespersons;²¹³ annual celebrations to recognize the achievements of Albertan women across sectors;^{214,215} and cultural, religious, sports, and other community organizations that promote women’s representation and leadership.²¹⁶
- Fund initiatives to support cultural, religious, sports, and other community organizations to create interventions that challenge norms, attitudes, and behaviours that support gender inequality²¹⁷ and increase women’s representation and leadership.²¹⁸
- Fund initiatives that promote positive role models for women and girls and create support networks to integrate them into local communities, especially recently arrived immigrant women, women with disabilities, and seniors.^{219,220,221}
- Fund women’s organizations and advocacy groups that increase women’s representation and leadership,²²² for example, through creating leadership opportunities, connecting women with female leaders who act as advisors and mentors,²²³ capacity building,²²⁴ and eliminating challenges to participation and leadership.²²⁵
- Fund initiatives that increase women’s representation in politics, for example, through campaigns encouraging parties to recruit more women; funding capacity building for women

to enter politics; supporting newly elected female politicians; organizing networking events for female officials at all levels of government.²²⁶

- Mandate more women to government agencies, boards, commissions, and advisory bodies,²²⁷ aiming for 50% of women in management and leadership government positions.²²⁸
- Mandate political parties and cultural, religious, sports, and other community organizations to use gender analysis in strategic planning as well as in designing initiatives for the public²²⁹ and to provide annual reports women's representation and leadership.^{230,231}
- Establish a Women's Hall of Fame to recognize women's contributions to Alberta and Canada.^{232,233,234}
- Develop a website with a register of female volunteers willing to serve as board members to help private and not-for-profit boards recruit female board members.
- Develop and adopt a provincial equality and safety in sport strategy.²³⁵

Priority Area 5: Monitoring and evaluating impact and change

Goal: Collect, measure, and use data to inform continuous quality improvement, innovation and ongoing research and evaluation regarding achieving gender equality to prevent violence

Strategy 13: Develop data collection and monitoring systems to support the implementation and evaluation of this plan

Actions:

- Develop a provincial gender segregation index to monitor progress across sectors and industries.²³⁶
- Map gender segregation and inequality measures across systems and sectors, such as education, employment, cultural, religious, sports, and other community organizations,²³⁷ with a provincial gender segregation index developed to monitor desegregation progress.
- Create a monitoring system for ongoing gender discrimination²³⁸ and institute regular audits of gender inclusivity and safety of systems and structures (for example, safety audits of public spaces).²³⁹
- Add indicators from Canada's Sustainable Development Goal plan where possible.
- Monitor and report annually on priorities, impact, and change.

Strategy 14: Build capacity of diverse sectors and organizations to collect data on gender equality measures

Actions:

- Through grants, support capacity building of human services organizations to collect, analyze, and use data for better services and outcomes for girls and women.^{240,241,242}
- Support the data collection, analysis, and operationalization on gender equality and women's socio-economic and political outcomes across sectors.^{243,244,245}

Strategy 15: Continually evaluate the impact of gender equality polices and investments on the reduction of GBV

Actions:

- Invest in research that identifies challenges and opportunities for gender equality and better outcomes for Albertan women and girls across systems and sectors, including education, employment, financial security, health, housing, etc.,^{246,247,248}
- Invest in the evaluation of programs and services aimed at Albertan women and girls that promote gender equality and better outcomes.^{249,250,251}

7.0 How can the GoA support the implementation of the proposed gender equality plan?

Here, we provide some practical considerations for implementing the gender equality plan, including useful approaches and a proposed governance structure.

Proposed approaches to incorporate into the gender equality plan

An evidence-informed gender equality plan includes:

1. **Whole-of-society approach to achieving gender equality:** Involve the entire government, private and not-for-profit sectors, educational institutions, community organizations, and mass media to make gender equality a core priority of all Albertans rather than the focus of a small specialist sector.²⁵² Additionally, develop a common framework for all stakeholders with identified goals, objectives, and activities for gender equality;²⁵³ create and disseminate a consolidated suite of information, trainings, and support resources for all stakeholders and build their capacity where feasible;²⁵⁴ and promote more coordinated and integrated policy and service provision among stakeholders.²⁵⁵
2. **Gender mainstreaming approach:** Mandate compulsory intersectional gender-based analysis (GBA+) training for all civil servants and management; use GBA+ in government legislative drafting, budget preparation, policymaking, and program design; conduct gender impact assessments across government ministries; mandate all ministries to identify key challenges to gender and socio-economic equality in their policy and program areas and allocate adequate resources to eliminate those challenges fully; embed gender and social equality objectives and gender-desegregated data in the business plans of each ministry.^{256,257,258}
3. **Social justice approach:** Commit to socially just structures and focus on the rights and needs of equity-deserving groups to achieve fair distribution of power, decision-making, and resources.²⁵⁹
4. **Centre the voices and unique needs of equity-deserving groups:**²⁶⁰ More specifically, recognize, rely on, and strengthen the expertise of women's and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and organizations;²⁶¹ and ensure that boys and men are deeply involved in gender equality work.^{262,263}

5. **Sustainable funding approach:** Guarantee stable, predictable funding for gender equality work and allow flexibility so that government-funded initiatives can be pivoted based on beneficiary feedback and emerging research and results.²⁶⁴

Proposed governance structure to support the implementation of the plan

To coordinate the implementation of a gender equality strategy, the GoA should establish the following governance structures involving the following stakeholders:

1. **An operational intergovernmental gender equality policy working group** with each ministry having at least one civil servant whose job description includes the coordination and promotion of gender mainstreaming.^{265,266,267}
2. **A provincial committee on gender equality** to implement research, shape public and organizational policy, design and implement initiatives, create resources, lead public education campaigns, and build capacity on gender equality.²⁶⁸
3. **Partnerships** with municipal governments, private and not-for-profit sectors, cultural, religious, sports, and other community organizations, and mass media to coordinate initiatives for promoting gender equality and safety from violence.²⁶⁹
4. **Creation of an independent Gender Equality Agency** to lead and monitor gender equality work across sectors (e.g., in education, workplaces, and sports)²⁷⁰ throughout the province.
5. **Creation of a Voices of Women Board** to advise the government on issues that affect women in education, workplaces, communities, and families.²⁷¹
6. **Development and investment in a network of organizations** working with boys and men and male champions of change to coordinate their participation in gender equality work.²⁷²

8.0 Conclusion

In addition to being a human rights violation, gender inequality is a driver of gender-based violence. Despite all the progress in ensuring women's and girls' rights, they still have worse outcomes in almost all areas, which creates gendered pathways to poverty, exclusion, and violence. The responsibility of the government is to implement a range of comprehensive legislation and policy reforms that will change norms around gender, help families and communities foster healthy relationships and conditions, and create safe environments across systems, institutions, and communities throughout Alberta. This research brief provides the groundwork for the Government of Alberta to develop and implement the *Alberta Gender Equality Plan* as a primary prevention strategy to stop gender-based violence before it starts.

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