

# Mapping Gender-Based Violence Policies Shaping British Columbia's Anti-Violence Sector: Commitments and Gaps



# **Mapping Gender-Based Violence Policies Shaping British Columbia's Anti-Violence Sector: Commitments and Gaps**

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As we examine gender-based violence (GBV) policy in Canada, we recognize that meaningful analysis must include the realities of colonialism, systemic injustice, and Indigenous self-determination. We are committed to learning from and amplifying Indigenous-led approaches and perspectives in all efforts to advance equity, justice, and safety.

Our commitment is rooted in a responsibility to learn from, uphold, and amplify Indigenous-led approaches to prevention of harm and healing. We recognize the importance of Indigenous self-determination in shaping solutions that reflect the cultural, spiritual, and community-based values of those most impacted.

These forces continue to disproportionately affect Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people. We acknowledge that state policies and institutional responses have historically failed to protect Indigenous communities, often perpetuating harm rather than providing safety.

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## Executive Summary

At the start of the year, the Government of British Columbia acknowledged gender-based violence (GBV) as a national epidemic in its mandate letter to the Minister of Finance<sup>1</sup>. This signals a commitment to ensure that the anti-violence sector is resourced sufficiently not only to respond to effects of GBV but also to proactively address upstream causes. It also signals a greater government commitment for policy shifts to address systemic barriers that impact survivors and anti-violence work. Recently, the government announced rent support for survivors of GBV in British Columbia through the Canada-BC Housing Benefit<sup>2</sup>. For decades, the anti-violence sector has been involved in fact-finding, collaborations, and advocacy to push for systemic changes to address the causes of the causes. The ongoing systematic review of the legal system's treatment of sexual and intimate partner violence is a move towards the right direction if coupled with action. Now is the time for bold actions.

GBV disproportionately impacts women, particularly Indigenous and racialized women. More than one third of women have been sexually assaulted at some point since age 15 in Canada<sup>3</sup>. Between 2018 and 2022, at least one woman or girl was killed every second day across the country<sup>4</sup>. During the pandemic, GBV became referred to as “the shadow pandemic” by actors in the anti-violence sector due to increased prevalence and severity. The consequences of GBV to survivors are profound and far-reaching, including negative physical and mental health outcomes, economic hardship, homelessness, isolation, and intergenerational trauma. While GBV is perpetrated by individuals, it is rooted in gender and systemic inequalities including those relating to colonialism, sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, and other forms of oppression.

This report presents an analysis of Canada's historical and ongoing policy approaches to addressing gender-based violence. It demonstrates greater consideration of diverse experiences and needs of Indigenous women, racialized communities, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals, and newcomers. It points to shifts over decades from viewing domestic violence as an individual issue to recognizing GBV as a systemic challenge. This recognition comes in the form of an expansion of policy areas addressed, increased funding pools, and greater acknowledgement of multi-level

government intervention. The 2021 *Federal Pathway to Addressing Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People* responding to the National Inquiry's Call for Justice brought Indigenous women and girls to the forefront in GBV response. The 2022 *National Action Plan to End GBV* and the 2023 British Columbia's *Safe and Supported: GBV Action Plan* are the main frameworks guiding resource allocation, policy direction, and coordination across jurisdictions. Commitments have included expanding shelter capacity, enhancing crisis response services, and investment in culturally appropriate programming for Indigenous communities. For instance, the Canada-BC Housing Benefit (CBCHB) will help survivors of gender-based violence, including women and their children and 2SLGBTQI+ people, transition to and maintain secure rental housing in the private market. The benefit is expected to support nearly 1,700 individuals or households during the critical time of vulnerability experienced by those leaving violence, experiencing homelessness, or with severe core housing need. This recognizes that individuals exiting violence may be experiencing financial abuse or face barriers to accessing other types of benefits because of complex family situations.

While policy documents highlight progress in GBV articulation and commitments, this report also highlights gaps. The *National Action Plan* was designed as a unified strategy. However, isolated implementation by various jurisdictions can contribute to inconsistencies and service gaps. Frontline service is also not explicitly articulated and is rather hidden within the broader frameworks. The anti-violence sector is largely serviced by nonprofit organizations which depend on government funding that is often insufficient and inconsistent. Although government funding to the sector has increased over the decades, it does not meet service needs. This creates an ever-present resource gap in the sector. The funding that is disbursed is unstable and characterized by short-term grants and uncoordinated funding cycles. This prevents long-term planning to address predictable needs and contributes to burnout among frontline workers and high turnover in the sector. These gaps point to an offloading of the responsibility to keep a large proportion of Canadians safe and housed to ill-resourced organizations.

We hope this report offers insight into the policies that shape the anti-violence sector by shedding light on the government commitments, the aspirations they hold, and the gaps that remain.

Alice Mũrage and Anna Ratzlaff

Social Services Workers on the Frontlines of GBV Response project

## 1. Scope & Objectives

This report examines Canada's gender-based violence (GBV) policies, with a focus on federal and British Columbia-specific initiatives. It provides an analysis of policy evolution, governance structures, and funding allocations to assess their impact, gaps, and challenges.

### **Objectives:**

- Map the evolution and scope of key federal and provincial GBV policies in Canada.
- Analyze how intergovernmental roles, coordination mechanisms, and accountability are framed in policy documents.
- Examine funding structures and commitments as described in public policy and budget documents.
- Identify systemic policy gaps and provide recommendations to strengthen Canada's GBV response.

### **Methodology**

This report is grounded in a policy analysis approach. It examines federal and the Province of British Columbia's GBV policy documents, government funding commitments, and intergovernmental agreements to assess the structure, intent, and coordination of GBV-related policies. While the report references publicly available reports, research studies, and advocacy group insights to contextualize gaps and challenges, it does not assess program implementation or measure policy outcomes on the ground. The primary focus is to analyze how policies are designed, framed, and coordinated—not to evaluate whether they achieved their intended impact.



## 2. Introduction

Canada's policy response to gender-based violence (GBV) has shifted from a reactive, criminal justice-centered approach to a more systemic and survivor-centered framework. Policymakers now acknowledge GBV as rooted in gender inequality and compounded by intersecting forms of oppression, prompting greater emphasis on prevention, empowerment, and trauma-informed care. However, many informants note that on-the-ground responses often remain anchored in criminal justice mechanisms, revealing a persistent gap between policy intent and implementation.

This evolving understanding has led to expanded strategies, increased funding, and cross-government collaboration. Yet GBV remains deeply embedded in systemic inequities and institutional structures. In January 2025, British Columbia signaled a growing sense of urgency when Premier David Eby, in a mandate letter to Minister of Finance Brenda Bailey, formally recognized gender-based violence as an epidemic—underscoring its scale and structural nature.<sup>5</sup>

Despite these efforts, gender-based violence continues to disproportionately impact Indigenous women and girls; Black and racialized women; immigrant and refugee women; Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and additional sexually and gender-diverse LGBTQIA2S+ individuals; women with disabilities; and those living in Northern, rural, and remote communities.<sup>6</sup> Approximately 30% of Canadian women aged 15 and older (4.7 million women) have experienced sexual assault, compared to 8% of men.<sup>7</sup> At least one woman or girl is killed every two days, and nearly 30% of women in British Columbia have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV).<sup>8 9</sup> Out of 50 unhoused women surveyed in Vancouver's Downtown East Side (DTES) in 2023, 100% reported experiencing violence, including sexual assault, while living in public spaces.<sup>10</sup> In November 2024, the City of Vancouver's Women's Advisory Committee recommended declaring gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and family violence as an epidemic.<sup>11</sup>

Despite national strategies and funding commitments, a lack of centralized oversight has often resulted in inconsistent service delivery, underfunded Indigenous-led initiatives, and frontline

workforce instability. This report examines how Canada’s GBV policies have evolved, where systemic gaps remain, and what solutions are needed to ensure a coordinated, survivor-centered approach.

This report provides a critical overview of the policy landscape, highlighting its implications for Indigenous communities, frontline workers, and key government stakeholders.

### 3. Key Policies Addressing GBV

Canada’s approach to gender-based violence has evolved significantly since the 1980s. This section provides an overview of key federal and provincial policies addressing GBV in Canada, highlighting how policy language, funding allocations, and evolving priorities have shaped responses to GBV over time.

#### Federal GBV Policies

1. It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address GBV (2017)<sup>12</sup>
2. National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Final Report (2019)<sup>13</sup>
3. National Action Plan to End GBV (2022)<sup>14</sup>

While the federal government began taking a more active role in GBV response in the 1980s, earlier responses were led by grassroots feminist movements, long before the sector became professionalized. This transition also signaled a growing governmental presence in what had previously been a grassroots-driven space, prompting changes in how GBV was addressed through policy and institutional mechanisms.

Before the 1990s, legal protections were minimal and specialized support services were scarce. Marital rape was only criminalized in 1983.<sup>15</sup> A notable development was a reform led by Status of Women Canada (now *Women and Gender Equality Canada*, established in 2018) in the early 1980s, which directed all levels of government to pursue an integrated response to “wife assault” (the term used at the time).<sup>16</sup> In 1988, the federal government launched Canada’s first Family

Violence Prevention Program, expanding funding for women's shelters.<sup>17 18</sup> Canada also made global commitments by endorsing the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). These moves signified a policy evolution from viewing domestic violence as a private family matter to treating it as a serious public offense requiring uniform law enforcement action and a recognition of GBV as a public issue requiring systemic intervention.

The 2010s saw institutional reforms and greater emphasis on prevention and intersectionality. Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) became central to federal policymaking, and emergency protection orders were introduced in multiple jurisdictions. In 2017, *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address GBV* was launched, incorporating trauma-informed survivor services, legal and policing reforms, and public awareness campaigns. The 2019 *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Report* issued 231 Calls for Justice, underscoring the urgency of addressing GBV in Indigenous communities. In 2022, *the National Action Plan to End GBV* marked a significant shift.

### *1) It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address GBV (2017)*

The federal *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address GBV* was launched in June 2017 as Canada's first national framework to address gender-based violence. It articulated a vision to prevent GBV against women, girls and LGBTQIA2S+ people, with goals to reduce GBV and improve outcomes for survivors. It has three pillars—prevention, support for survivors/families, and promoting responsive justice systems.

The strategy recognized diverse populations—women and girls, Indigenous people, LGBTQ2 and gender non-conforming people, those living in northern, rural, and remote communities, people with disabilities, newcomers, children and youth, and seniors”—and aimed at filling gaps in supports for these groups. Importantly, it also took a horizontal approach, engaging six core federal departments and agencies with funded initiatives, with Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) as the lead. This structure helped coordinate federal efforts and signaled high-level commitment.<sup>19</sup> Another strength was the creation of a Gender-Based Violence Knowledge

Centre (December 2018) to improve data, research, and knowledge-sharing, addressing long-standing gaps in evidence.<sup>20</sup>

In total, over \$800 million has been invested under the federal GBV strategy since 2017-18, with an ongoing commitment of \$44 million per year.

- Budget 2017: Initial commitment of \$100.9 million over 5 years (2017–18 to 2021–22) and \$20.7 million per year ongoing.<sup>21</sup>
- Budget 2018: The federal government expanded the GBV Strategy with an additional \$86 million over 5 years (2018–19 to 2022–23) and about \$20 million per year ongoing.<sup>22</sup>
- COVID-19 Emergency Funding (2020): Approximately \$100 million was committed as emergency relief for GBV organizations during the pandemic. WAGE received \$90 million to distribute.<sup>17 23</sup>
- Budget 2021: It committed \$601.3 million over 5 years (2021-2025) for the development of the national action plan. \$415 million of this was allocated to WAGE for expanded programming, including directly supporting GBV organizations on the frontlines.<sup>19</sup>

The mid-term review of the plan found the initial funding and breadth of initiatives appropriate to the strategy's scope but urged expansion "beyond the federal scope" to include more partners.<sup>14</sup> However, despite its merits, it had notable design limitations including a lack of built-in formal mechanisms to align or compel provincial or territorial action—a significant gap considering that many GBV services including policing, health and housing fall under provincial jurisdiction. Observers criticized that the federal strategy "is missing clear targets with timelines and does not set standards for provinces and territories."<sup>24</sup> In essence, it was a federal plan without a binding national strategy, which meant inconsistent implementation across Canada.

This led to internal governance challenges as well. The same mid-term review found that roles and responsibilities among federal committees were not consistently operationalized, causing duplication and inefficiency.<sup>14</sup> There was minimal evidence of collaboration between some federal partners, and clarity of leadership suffered after the transition from Status of Women Canada to the new WAGE department.<sup>14</sup>

These issues, compounded by high staff turnover and the complexity of a horizontal initiative, resulted in uneven execution of some strategy elements.<sup>14</sup> For example, a national youth GBV awareness campaign (a Prevention pillar initiative) was significantly delayed and only launched in 2022.<sup>14</sup> It is also noted that the strategy set broad goals but without firm outcome targets or an independent monitoring mechanism, making it hard to enforce progress.<sup>14 25</sup>

As an interim step, the strategy has laid important groundwork—e.g. building the capacity of organizations, improving laws and collecting data—yet the overall prevalence of GBV is still alarmingly high, underscoring that sustained effort (and provincial collaboration) is needed beyond this initial phase. Additionally, the strategy only applied to federal departments. Provinces and territories have continued to operate with varied—and at times inconsistent—laws and policies.

*2) National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) & Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada) (2021-24)*

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), launched in 2016, investigated the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQIA2S+ people in Canada. Its final report, *Reclaiming Power and Place* (2019) identified persistent human and Indigenous rights violations as the root causes of this violence, characterizing it as a “Canadian genocide.” The report issued 231 Calls for Justice, urging reforms across sectors such as child welfare, policing, justice, education, and media. A key overarching call (Call 1.1) urged all governments to develop and implement a coordinated National Action Plan “that is rooted in the local cultures and communities of diverse Indigenous identities.”

The Inquiry was Indigenous-led, with four First Nations, Métis, and Inuit commissioners. Its process was unprecedented in scope and approach, combining formal hearings with culturally grounded ceremonies and statement-gathering sessions. It employed trauma-informed, culturally sensitive practices, and examined not only individual cases but also the broader systems that

enable violence. The Calls for Justice were framed not as recommendations, but as legal imperatives grounded in human and Indigenous rights.

However, the Inquiry faced limitations. Time and resource constraints impacted the depth of investigation into critical issues such as police misconduct and human trafficking.<sup>26</sup> Crucially, the Inquiry lacked binding enforcement powers, placing full responsibility for implementation on governments. As of 2023, only two of the 231 Calls for Justice have been fully implemented (5.20 and 5.23), with over half remaining unstated.<sup>27</sup> Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), Assembly of First Nations (AFN), and the National Family and Survivors Circle (NFSC) have criticized the slow pace of progress, lack of visible on-the-ground change, and absence of meaningful government accountability in addressing gender-based violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada.<sup>28 29 30</sup>

In response to continued pressure from advocates and families, the federal government launched the Federal Pathway to Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ People on June 3, 2021.<sup>31</sup> The Pathway identified four priority areas: Culture, Health & Wellness, Human Safety & Security, and Justice — echoing the Inquiry's call for a multifaceted approach.

In alignment with Federal Pathway and MMWIG, the 2020 Fall Economic Statement committed \$781.5 million over five years (2021–2025), as well as \$106.3 million in ongoing funding. In total, \$724.1 million was earmarked to launch a Comprehensive Violence Prevention Strategy (CVPS) “to expand culturally relevant supports for Indigenous Peoples facing gender-based violence and support 88 new emergency shelters and transitional housing across the country, including in the North and in urban centers.”<sup>32 33</sup>

An additional \$31.3 million was administered by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) to support Indigenous-led GBV prevention initiatives. The remainder of the CVPS funding supports health and wellness services, justice system reform, and community safety programs, aiming to address the root causes and systemic drivers of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQIA2S+ people (Government of Canada, 2021).

While the funding commitments are significant, implementation and accountability remain key concerns. Critics have raised doubts about whether funds are being disbursed in a timely and transparent manner, and whether core funding—particularly for Indigenous women’s organizations—will be sustained beyond 2025.<sup>21</sup> Without clear timelines, measurable targets, and an independent oversight mechanism, commitments may not translate into sustained impact.

As such, the Federal Pathway represents progress in aligning GBV policy with Indigenous-led approaches. However, fragmented funding streams, lack of coordination across jurisdictions, and absence of clear accountability mechanisms continue to hinder effective implementation.

Its success will depend on timely disbursement, long-term investments, Indigenous control over resources, and integration with provincial and territorial efforts. As repeated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices alike, the implementation must center survivors’ leadership, ensure transparency, and move from promises to sustained systemic change.

### *3) National Action Plan to End GBV (2022) (NAP)*

The National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (NAP), launched in November 2022, is Canada’s first comprehensive, coordinated framework to address GBV across all jurisdictions.<sup>34</sup> It builds on over a decade of advocacy from women’s organizations, the federal government’s 2017 GBV Strategy (It’s Time), and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). This Plan acknowledged that no single government or sector can solve GBV alone, thus committing all jurisdictions to work together.

The NAP was informed by more than 1,000 recommendations from survivors, frontline workers, Indigenous partners, civil society, and researchers.<sup>16</sup> Its central premise: no single government or sector can end GBV alone. All provinces and territories endorsed a Joint Declaration for a Canada Free of GBV in 2021, committing to a shared vision for a 10-year plan.

The NAP is built on five interconnected pillars, underpinned by intersectionality and human rights: (1) Support for Victims, Survivors and Their Families; (2) Prevention; (3) Responsive Justice System; (4) Indigenous-led Approaches; (5) Social Infrastructure and Enabling Environment. It addresses the full continuum of gender-based violence—from intimate partner violence and sexual assault to online harassment and human trafficking—and recognizes the diverse experiences of women, girls, LGBTQIA2S+ people, Indigenous Peoples, racialized people, immigrants, people with disabilities, and rural residents.

The five-pillar structure ensures both reactive responses (support services, justice system reform) and proactive strategies (education, prevention, and socio-economic support). Notably, Pillar 4 on Indigenous-led approaches aligns the NAP with the MMIWG2S+ National Action Plan, acknowledging the need for self-determined, culturally grounded solutions.

The NAP includes an accountability and reporting mechanism, featuring annual progress reports and an Expected Results Framework with national indicators—an important step toward consistent outcome measurement.

However, critiques highlighted potential roadblocks at the time of the Plan's release. While conceptually robust, the NAP lacked operational detail:<sup>35</sup>

- No new national oversight body was created
- No legislative standards were established
- Few concrete targets or timelines were included

The evolution from three pillars in the 2017 *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence* to five pillars in the 2022 *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* (NAP) reflects an attempt by the government to introduce pillars addressing systemic and structural changes. This includes a focus on social infrastructure (e.g., affordable housing, childcare) and leadership, coordination, and engagement to ensure sustained government commitment and inter-jurisdictional collaboration. Table 1 below outlines how these pillars build on the 2017 strategy and reflect a shift toward more systemic responses.



Table 1: 2017 and 2022 federal policy pillars

Category	2017 It's Time Strategy – 3 pillars	2022 National Action Plan – 5 pillars	Key Changes
Support for Survivors	Pillar 2: Support for survivors and their families	Pillar 1: Support for Victims, Survivors and Their Families	Emphasizes trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and survivor-centered services.
Prevention	Pillar 1: Prevention	Pillar 2: Prevention	Maintains a strong focus on education, awareness, and challenging social norms.
Justice System Response	Pillar 3: Promotion of responsive legal and justice systems	Pillar 3: Responsive Justice	Broadened to improve accountability and accessibility, with a focus on survivor experiences.
Indigenous-Led Approaches	-	Pillar 4: Indigenous-led Approaches	New dedicated pillar, acknowledging the need for self-determined, Indigenous-led solutions.
Social Infrastructure & Systems	-	Pillar 5: Social Infrastructure and Enabling Environment	Recognizes the role of housing, childcare, and financial security in preventing GBV.

The federal government committed \$601.3 million over five years (Budget 2021) to develop and implement the National Action Plan (NAP). The following year, Budget 2022 allocated \$539.3 million over five years (2022-2027) to support provincial and territorial implementation through bilateral agreements.<sup>16</sup> Together, these commitments—totaling approximately \$1.14 billion—form the core federal investment in the NAP.

The \$539.3 million in provincial and territorial funding is distributed through bilateral agreements and is intended to “supplement and enhance” local GBV services, including emergency shelters, counseling, legal support, and prevention programs.<sup>36</sup> It has also supported national initiatives such as data collection, public education campaigns, and training of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

Additionally, total combined GBV-related government spending (federal + provincial and territorial) exceeded \$558 million in 2023–24 under the NAP.<sup>37</sup>

However, analyses indicate that Budget 2023 did not introduce additional funds for Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence or for the Women's Program at Women and Gender Equality Canada, raising concerns about the plan's sustainability. Similarly, Budget 2024 lacked new funding to prevent and address GBV, with the NAP cited only to acknowledge previous investments.<sup>38 39</sup>

These funding gaps are compounded by the reduced mandate and operational capacity of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), the federal department responsible for coordinating the National Action Plan. The formal elimination of the dedicated Minister for Women and Gender Equality in early 2025 raises additional concerns about the long-term sustainability and accountability of Canada's GBV commitments.

The plan's reliance on provincial and territorial cooperation is both a strength (enabling regional adaptation) and a vulnerability. For example, Quebec opted out of the formal NAP, citing its jurisdictional autonomy, and instead, Quebec supports the objectives but follows its own strategy, under a separate agreement.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, implementation depends heavily on political will at the provincial level—with risks of underfunding or deprioritization depending on government leadership.

In sum, the NAP marks a critical milestone in advancing coordinated, intersectional GBV policy. However, its success will depend on sustained funding, strong accountability mechanisms, and effective intergovernmental cooperation—all of which remain ongoing challenges.

## Provincial GBV Policies

1. British Columbia Domestic Violence Action Plan (2014)<sup>41</sup>
2. Stronger B.C. for Everyone: Safe & Supported: B.C.'s GBV Action Plan (2023)<sup>42</sup>

British Columbia has been a national leader in developing coordinated GBV policies, beginning with its 1986 Wife Assault Policy, which mandated a cross-sector response involving justice and child welfare systems. This evolved into the 1993 Violence Against Women in Relationships

(VAWIR) Policy, providing a framework for collaboration among police, courts, and social services.<sup>43</sup>

From the 1990s to early 2010s, B.C. introduced several initiatives. These initiatives included the Stopping the Violence Strategy, which expanded counselling and housing services, and the creation of the Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons (OCTIP) in 2007, the first provincial agency of its kind in Canada.<sup>44</sup>

These early efforts laid the groundwork for more structured, province-wide action. The 2014 British Columbia Domestic Violence Plan marked a shift toward cross-ministerial coordination and more consistent policy direction. Building on this foundation, the 2023 Safe and Supported: GBV Action Plan represents the province's most comprehensive strategy to date—prioritizing Indigenous-led approaches, expanding crisis supports, and implementing reforms to improve policing standards in GBV response.

### *1) British Columbia's Provincial Domestic Violence Plan (2014)*

Between 2004 and 2014, 113 women were killed in British Columbia by intimate partners, exposing critical gaps and urgency in prevention and intervention systems.<sup>45</sup> In 2012, after the Representative for Children and Youth's (RCY) report *Honouring Kaitlynn, Max and Cordon: Make Their Voices Heard Now*,<sup>46</sup> B.C. developed the *Taking Action on Domestic Violence in British Columbia* plan.<sup>47</sup> This plan created a coordinated approach to domestic violence across child and family services. A key achievement was establishing the Provincial Office of Domestic Violence (PODV), which provided leadership and coordinated policies across government ministries to ensure the effective implementation of domestic violence initiatives.

Building on this work in February 2014, British Columbia's 3-year Domestic Violence Plan was released marking the province's first coordinated, multi-sectoral framework.

Key contributions of the plan included:

- Establishment of the PODV to coordinate efforts across ministries, strengthen intergovernmental accountability, and ensure a consistent policy approach to domestic violence.
- Engaging eight ministries, law enforcement, and service providers to improve survivor safety and streamline service delivery.
- Highlighting the specific needs of Indigenous women, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, and rural communities.
- Laying the groundwork for future policies, including Safe & Supported: B.C.'s Gender-Based Violence Action Plan (2023), and contributed to B.C.'s alignment with national and international GBV frameworks.

While the Progress Reports noted improvements in coordination and service delivery, the plan mainly measured success through completion of training programs, developing evaluation frameworks, and launching new programs such as the Safety Planning tool and a 24/7 telephone line for victims.<sup>48</sup>

The initial \$5.5 million budget was modest and relied on integration into larger ministry budgets:<sup>49</sup>

- \$1 million for direct services
- \$2 million for Indigenous-specific programs
- \$1 million for perpetrator intervention
- \$1.5 million for rural and remote supports

In 2015, the province released A Vision for a Violence Free B.C., a strategic framework that built on the 2014 plan and broadened its scope to include all forms of violence against women. It integrated earlier initiatives like the Domestic Violence Plan and the Human Trafficking Action Plan, with a focus on prevention, awareness, and systemic change.

After 2017, the new provincial government did not release a “phase two” of the domestic violence plan but shifted toward larger-scale investments in related areas. Examples include:

- \$734 million over 10 years (2018): Women’s Transition Housing Fund to build second-stage and long-term housing.<sup>50</sup>
- \$10 million (2020): In March 2020, the provincial government provided \$10 million to the Ending Violence Association of B.C. (EVA BC) to administer a multi-year Emergency Sexual Assault Services (ESAS) grant program.<sup>51</sup>
- The provincial government increased annual funding for victim service and violence against women programs by \$5 million starting in 2018/19, with an additional \$3 million in 2020/21, totaling over \$37 million annually to support more than 400 programs across the province.<sup>52</sup>

By 2016, the Second Annual Report noted some operational progress, including expanded professional training and stronger coordination with non-governmental organizations.<sup>53</sup> The “Violence Free BC” initiative contributed to modest shifts in public discourse by framing domestic violence as a broader societal concern. Certain tools—such as risk assessment protocols and interagency case assessment teams—began to see more consistent use.

The 2014 plan as well as the subsequent efforts fell under British Columbia’s broader “Violence Free BC” vision, which included public awareness campaigns and school-based prevention programs. In 2017, the creation of a standalone Gender Equity Office and subsequent references to a forthcoming gender-based violence action plan reflected a gradual broadening of scope—moving from domestic violence to a more inclusive, intersectional GBV policy.

B.C.’s 2014 Domestic Violence Plan represented a necessary first step in creating coordinated GBV infrastructure. It piloted meaningful collaboration across ministries and introduced an equity lens that shaped future strategies. However, its short lifespan, limited funding, and lack of embedded oversight mechanisms constrained its long-term impact.

This plan provided short-term system improvements such as training, protocols and services, and provided a springboard for future strategies.

## *2) Safe & Supported: British Columbia's GBV Action Plan (2023)*

In December 2023, the Government of British Columbia launched Safe and Supported: British Columbia's Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Action Plan, a three-year strategy (2023–2026) aimed at building a more integrated, survivor-centered, and culturally responsive response to GBV. The plan follows sustained advocacy from civil society and several high-profile femicide cases, alongside growing public awareness that GBV remains a crisis in the province.

Leading up to the plan's release, B.C. had witnessed a rise in intimate partner violence and femicide (mirroring national trends), renewed calls from Indigenous communities in the wake of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), and the compounding effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated violence in the home.

The *Safe & Supported* GBV action plan is structured around four key pillars:

### **1. Increasing Safety and Support for Survivors**

Includes investment in 24/7 crisis lines, transition housing, trauma-informed counselling, legal support, and regional policing standards to better respond to GBV.

### **2. Lifting Up Indigenous-Led Approaches**

Centers the leadership of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, commits to implementing the MMIWG Calls for Justice, supports the B.C. Family Information Liaison Unit, and establishes the *Path Forward Community Fund* to resource Indigenous-led, culturally safe GBV initiatives.<sup>54</sup>

### **3. Breaking Cycles of Violence through Prevention, Healing, and Accountability**

Focuses on long-term prevention, including education, engaging men and boys, and expanding perpetrator accountability and healing programs.

### **4. Learning from and Monitoring Our Progress**

Emphasizes continuous evaluation, investment in disaggregated data systems, and flexibility to adapt the plan based on community feedback and measurable outcomes.

This plan does not isolate domestic violence but addresses gender-based violence broadly and intersectionally. It was co-developed through consultations with Indigenous leaders, service providers, survivors, community organizations, and families impacted by GBV.<sup>55 56 57</sup>

Its implementation is jointly led by the Ministry of Finance’s Gender Equity Office (home to the Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity) and the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, reflecting a cross-government structure. The GBV Action Plan Advisory Committee, established in 2022, continues to play a role in monitoring implementation and recommending course corrections.<sup>42</sup>

The plan is supported by a mix of federal and provincial funding.

**Federal Contributions:**

Under the Canada–B.C. Bilateral Agreement announced on December 8, 2023; the federal government is providing \$61.9 million over four years (2023-2027). More than half of the new funding will be invested in Indigenous-led initiatives. In 2023-24, federal contributions totaled \$7.8 million, while B.C. invested \$67.3 million, reflecting the province’s leadership in GBV funding. The combined budget for 2024-25 is projected at \$86.5 million, with increased federal funding for Indigenous-led programs.<sup>58</sup>

The Province of B.C. manages the allocation of federal funds, ensuring alignment with provincial priorities. Annual progress reporting is required by July 31, covering implementation status, expenditures, and a list of recipient organizations. Canada may request independent audits, with costs covered by the federal government. A joint federal-provincial evaluation is also planned to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the NAP-GBV across jurisdictions.

**Provincial Contributions:<sup>42</sup>**

B.C. allocates more than \$60 million annually toward GBV-related services, including support for transition houses, victim services, counselling, and violence prevention initiatives.

Key provincial investments include:

- \$54 million annually to support over 470 victim services, sexual assault programs, and violence prevention services.
- \$10 million annually (launched in 2023) to expand sexual assault services, resulting in 70 new programs—22 specifically for Indigenous survivors—and five new sexual assault centres in Victoria, Surrey, Vancouver, Prince George, and Kamloops.

- A \$1.2 billion, 10-year investment (announced in 2018 and reaffirmed in 2023) to build and operate 3,000 housing units for women and children fleeing violence.
- \$44 million to expand Indigenous Justice Centres to 15 locations (plus one virtual centre) by 2024–25.

B.C. has also committed:

- Over \$10.8 million since 2022 to the *Path Forward Community Fund*, supporting Indigenous-led safety planning and capacity-building efforts.
- \$1.3 million since 2017 to support community-led initiatives through the Minister’s Advisory Council on Indigenous Women.
- \$2.2 million since 2018 to address sexualized violence at post-secondary institutions via training, awareness, and reporting system improvements.

In March 2024, the province—through federal NAP-GBV funding—announced an additional \$1.4 million for the Violence is Preventable (VIP) school-based program led by the B.C. Society of Transition Houses and PEACE program counsellors.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the plan’s strong architecture and alignment with the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (2022), several critical gaps remain that may undermine its long-term effectiveness.

- Long-term sustainability remains unclear. Budget 2024 introduced no major new provincial GBV-specific funding. Some existing initiatives appear to be reframed as matches to federal contributions, raising questions about whether frontline organizations will have stable funding to scale or maintain services.
- Limited timeline. The plan’s three-year scope has prompted calls for a longer-term or legislated strategy to reflect unstable programming as well as the structural and intergenerational nature of GBV.
- Service delivery will be the true measure of success. While B.C. has committed to working with the GBV Action Plan Advisory Committee and the Gender Equity Office to monitor implementation, it will be critical that investments translate into tangible improvements for survivors, such as increased access to housing, legal aid, and culturally safe services.



Table 2: Policy Evolution on Gender-Based Violence (2017–2023)

Area	Improvements	Policies Reflecting Change	Gaps and Challenges
<b>Scope of Action</b>	Shift from a federal-only strategy ( <i>It's Time</i> , 2017) to a federal-provincial-territorial framework (NAP, 2022), acknowledging the need for shared responsibility across jurisdictions.	<i>It's Time (2017) → NAP to End GBV (2022)</i>	Coordination remains inconsistent; provinces vary in implementation.
<b>Framing of GBV</b>	Policy language evolved from viewing GBV as individual or interpersonal violence to recognizing it as rooted in systemic inequities, power imbalances, and colonization.	<i>MMIWG Final Report (2019), NAP to End GBV (2022), Safe &amp; Supported BC (2023)</i>	Despite this shift, structural causes are often acknowledged in language but not fully addressed in implementation, funding, or accountability mechanisms.
<b>Recognition of Intersectionality</b>	Previously limited attention to diverse experiences, now more inclusion of Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, and other marginalized communities in program design and funding priorities.	<i>Federal Pathway (2021), NAP (2022), Safe &amp; Supported BC (2023)</i>	Programs often lack adequate resourcing for culturally specific services; some voices remain underrepresented.
<b>Funding Scale</b>	Expansion from a \$100M+ strategy in 2017 to multi-billion-dollar, multi-year investments (e.g., \$601.3M via Budget 2021, \$1.2B in BC).	<i>Budgets 2021–2024, Safe &amp; Supported BC (2023)</i>	Funding not always sustained or equitably distributed; delays in flowing funds.
<b>Indigenous-Led Approaches</b>	From general references to Indigenous inclusion to specific streams of funding and co-leadership in GBV programming (e.g., MMIWG Final Report, Federal Pathway).	<i>MMIWG Final Report (2019), Federal Pathway (2021)</i>	Implementation uneven; many Indigenous organizations still underfunded.
<b>Data and Accountability Tools</b>	Introduction of the Gender-Based Violence Knowledge Centre (WAGE) and tracking mechanisms through bilateral agreements. Some annual reporting and shared evaluations now required.	<i>It's Time (2017), NAP (2022), Bilateral Agreements (2023)</i>	Limited public transparency; data disaggregated by race, gender, and region is still scarce.
<b>Integrated Services</b>	Movement towards more coordinated response models: trauma-informed policing, 24/7 crisis lines, housing supports, and school-based prevention programming.	<i>Safe &amp; Supported BC (2023), Federal VIP Funding (2024)</i>	Gaps remain in rural/remote access; workforce burnout and gaps in trauma training persist.

# Municipal

While municipalities do not set criminal law, they play a key role in operationalizing GBV policies through local police services, social programs, and community-based coordination. Initiatives like B.C.’s Third Party Reporting (TPR) protocol, which allows survivors to report sexual assaults anonymously via community agencies, rely on local police and service provider collaboration.<sup>60</sup>

Many cities also host local coordination tables that bring together police, shelters, hospitals, and municipal staff to adapt provincial and federal GBV policies to local realities. These structures help synchronize services like housing, victim support, and justice response.<sup>61</sup>

However, formal coordination among municipal governments remains limited. The City of Vancouver has taken leadership through its Women’s Equity Strategy, but no municipality in British Columbia has implemented a dedicated plan to end GBV as of August 2023. In most regions, efforts remain largely community-led, with municipal engagement varying widely and often embedded in broader gender equity or community safety strategies. As of August 2023, it has been noted that no local governments in British Columbia had "developed or implemented a concerted plan to end gender-based violence".<sup>62</sup>

<Key Coordination Challenges>

Canada’s approach to gender-based violence (GBV) policy shows clear momentum toward intersectional, survivor-centered responses. However, major coordination challenges remain that undermine implementation. The following analysis identifies key areas for improvement and policy development:

**Fragmentation**

While GBV is a shared responsibility, voluntary intergovernmental agreements lack enforceable standards. Provinces and territories can opt out or deprioritize federal goals (e.g., Quebec’s independent framework), creating patchwork responses across the country.

**Indigenous Governance & Nation-to-Nation Relations**

Federal commitments like the MMIWG2S+ National Action Plan recognize Indigenous leadership but lack mechanisms to integrate Indigenous governance structures into GBV policymaking. Despite formal commitments,

Indigenous policy actors face structural barriers in securing sustained, core funding aligned with Nation-to-Nation principles.

#### **Funding Volatility**

Misaligned funding cycles—like the federal 10-year NAP versus B.C.'s 3-year plan—lead to instability for frontline service providers, especially in rural, remote, and northern communities. The lack of core, multi-year funding limits staff retention, long-term planning, and trauma-informed care continuity.

#### **Data Deficits & Accountability Gaps**

While Canada tracks some GBV indicators (e.g., reports to police, homicide rates), there's no national, interoperable data system to monitor long-term survivor outcomes such as housing, safety, or financial security. Calls persist for an independent accountability body or federal-provincial GBV scorecard to track and report progress.

#### **Decentralization Without Minimum Standards**

Provincial flexibility is essential, but without a minimum baseline for GBV protections, survivors experience inconsistent services and rights when moving across jurisdictions. For example, Clare's Law is in effect in some provinces but absent in others like B.C.

## **4. Service Delivery and Frontline Workers: Policy Gaps and Challenges**

Frontline workers play a critical role in Canada's gender-based violence (GBV) response, providing direct support to survivors, facilitating crisis intervention, and delivering trauma-informed care. Despite their essential contributions, frontline workers often face systemic challenges that remain inadequately addressed in GBV policies.

Mental health and workplace well-being remain major concerns, yet GBV policies offer little concrete support for frontline staff. A 2020 study found that 42% of GBV service providers in Canada reported deteriorating mental health, while 72% experienced heightened stress due to the emotional toll of their work.<sup>63</sup> Exposure to trauma, high caseloads, and job insecurity exacerbate these challenges.<sup>64</sup>

While British Columbia has taken steps to integrate mental health services into the public healthcare system, gaps remain in ensuring comprehensive support for GBV workers. Federal initiatives such as the Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention Fund aim to mitigate

workplace trauma, but frontline workers often report limited accessibility to specialized mental health services.<sup>65</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated mental health concerns among GBV service providers. Government responses primarily focused on emergency services for survivors, with less emphasis on the psychosocial needs of workers. For instance, the Government of Canada invested \$300 million in emergency COVID-19 funding to support over 1,400 frontline organizations assisting those experiencing GBV. While this funding was crucial for maintaining survivor services, it did not specifically address the mental health support required for the workers themselves.<sup>66</sup>

While national and provincial policies emphasize training and capacity-building for service providers, they typically frame these efforts as means to improve survivor care rather than to support the workforce itself. Direct investments in the well-being, compensation, and career development of frontline workers are rarely prioritized.

Additionally, GBV community and non-profit frontline workers remain underpaid compared to public sector counterparts, despite performing essential work. Individuals working in nonprofit organizations earn, on average, over \$18,000 less per year than those employed in the broader economy.<sup>67</sup> While B.C.'s Community Social Services Employers' Association (CSSEA) establishes wage benchmarks for the sector, it is unclear whether these standards are applied consistently across GBV organizations. Unlike federally recognized care workers—such as those in childcare or home support—there does not appear to be a formal wage recognition for GBV workers at the national or provincial level.

### Lack of a Clear Definition for "Frontline Workers" in GBV Policies

A key challenge is the absence of a standardized definition of "frontline workers" across federal and provincial GBV policies. Terms like "*service providers*," "*victim support workers*," and "*first responders*" are often used interchangeably, leading to inconsistencies in funding, training access, and workplace protections.

- **It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address GBV (2017):**  
Uses the term "*service providers*" but offers no formal definition. Frontline workers are generally understood as those delivering GBV-related services.
- **Federal Pathway on MMIWG (2021):**  
Does not explicitly define frontline workers but references "*front line*" and "*service providers*" in context. It underscores the importance of community-based, culturally relevant, and trauma-informed services, particularly in Indigenous-led responses to GBV. The document acknowledges the critical role of various service providers in delivering these services.
- **National Action Plan to End GBV (2022):**  
Refers broadly to "*frontline workers*" without providing a standardized definition. This ambiguity limits consistency in funding eligibility and support across jurisdictions.
- **B.C. Domestic Violence Plan (2014):**  
No formal definition provided, but references to specific frontline sectors—such as police, child welfare, and victim services—suggest an implicit definition through sectoral naming. The term "*anti-violence partners*" is used broadly to refer to community organizations.
- **Safe & Supported: B.C.'s GBV Action Plan (2023):**  
Acknowledges the importance of frontline services but lacks definitional clarity. The absence of a precise classification complicates targeted workforce support and funding mechanisms.

Additionally, Indigenous frontline workers face additional barriers due to the lack of formal recognition for culturally specific roles such as Elders, knowledge keepers, and Indigenous community support workers. These roles are essential to trauma-informed care but often fall outside conventional funding and workforce frameworks.

This lack of clarity results in frontline workers being excluded from essential funding streams and policy supports, particularly those in rural, remote, or underserved communities.

## Reflection on gaps in frontline worker support

Across federal and provincial policies, support for frontline workers is not treated as a central priority. Instead, it is often embedded within broader objectives under categories like training, capacity-building, or service expansion. While this approach improves survivor care, it leaves frontline worker well-being unaddressed. Challenges for frontline worker well-being, in turn, impact service provision to survivors.

- Policies often rely on training programs as the primary form of support. While training is essential, it is not sufficient to address systemic challenges like project-based funding models, burnout, low wages, and mental health needs.
- Objectives relating to the workforce are typically framed as ways to improve survivor outcomes, rather than as dedicated commitments to improving working conditions.
- Governments tend to focus on expanding service capacity without matching investments in the workforce that sustains those services.
- There is no national system to collect data on burnout, turnover, or other workforce-related metrics, limiting the government's ability to track and address workforce challenges.

While this review outlines preliminary findings on how major GBV policy documents address frontline worker support, further in-depth analysis is needed. Many plans refer to training, funding, or partnerships that may indirectly benefit frontline workers, but detailed tracking of program-specific allocations, eligibility criteria, and implementation outcomes remains limited. A more rigorous content analysis could examine where and how support is embedded—whether explicitly labeled or nested within broader initiatives—and assess the extent to which this support translates into measurable improvements in working conditions, mental health access, or job security.

Funding supports to the sector primarily focusses on scaling up service capacity and stabilizing core programs. However, direct support for the workers themselves—such as fair wages, benefits, and mental health resources—is often indirect or underdeveloped in current policy language. In

British Columbia, no dedicated line item exists for frontline staff well-being (e.g., burnout prevention, peer support), and while training investments (e.g., trauma-informed practice) are referenced, they are not always explicitly budgeted in public summaries.

## 5. Indigenous-Led GBV Response: Policy Gaps and Challenges

This section consolidates federal, provincial, and comparative insights to highlight the essential role of Indigenous-led approaches in addressing GBV—and the policy, funding, and governance gaps that still hinder their full realization.

Efforts to address gender-based violence (GBV) in Canada cannot be meaningfully understood—or effectively implemented—without confronting the colonial legacy and ongoing structural violence facing Indigenous communities. Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQIA2S+ individuals experience disproportionately high rates of violence, rooted in historic and systemic inequities across health, justice, and social systems.<sup>68</sup>

- Indigenous women are six times more likely to be victims of homicide than non-Indigenous women.
- Rates of intimate partner violence (IPV) are twice as high among Indigenous women compared to non-Indigenous women.<sup>69</sup>

Responding to GBV in Indigenous contexts requires a decolonial, trauma-informed, and culturally grounded approach—one that centers Indigenous leadership and supports community-led healing and safety strategies.

Globally, only a few countries have formally embedded Indigenous-led GBV approaches into national frameworks. Canada stands out for its institutionalized commitments and funding mechanisms, notably through the National Action Plan to End GBV (2022) and the Federal Pathway to Address MMIWG2S+.

Pillar Two on prevention, as outlined in the National Action Plan, the federal government's 2017 It's Time strategy, and B.C.'s 2023 Safe and Supported plan, explicitly recognizes the importance of

programs rooted in the land and in local cultures and communities of diverse Indigenous identities, including urban Indigenous Peoples, acknowledging their essential role in culturally grounded violence prevention efforts.

Pillar Four of the National Action Plan to End GBV explicitly calls for Indigenous-led solutions rooted in self-determination, healing, and cultural safety. Key commitments include:

- A dedicated pillar on Indigenous-led responses, aligning with the MMIWG2S+ National Action Plan.
- Recognition of the distinct needs and identities of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.
- Support for community-based, culturally grounded services designed and delivered by Indigenous organizations.
- Emphasis on addressing root causes, such as housing insecurity, colonial trauma, and socio-economic exclusion.
- Commitment to inclusive policymaking, ensuring Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people shape programs and evaluations.
- The Federal Pathway, a parallel framework outlining specific federal actions and funding streams to address violence against Indigenous peoples.

The Federal Pathway to Address MMIWG2S+ is complemented by programs like Justice Canada's Supporting Indigenous Victims of Crime (SIVC), which funds Indigenous-designed, trauma-informed services for victims navigating the justice system.<sup>70</sup> While not GBV-specific, SIVC supports initiatives that align with broader MMIWG and GBV priorities.

By comparison:

- Australia has introduced targeted funding for First Nations-led research and men's wellness centers, but these remain largely program-based rather than systemic.
- Ecuador and Peru rely on grassroots, Indigenous-women-led activism, with limited government integration.<sup>71 72</sup>



While Canada's model is more advanced in structure, it still faces significant challenges in implementation.

British Columbia has taken steps to weave in Indigenous-led GBV responses through both legislative and programmatic channels. In 2019, it became the first Canadian jurisdiction to legislate the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) through the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. Under the 2023 *Safe & Supported GBV Action Plan*, notable actions include:

- Allocating more than half of the new federal funding (\$61.9 million over four years) to Indigenous-led initiatives.
- Establishing a 24/7 crisis line, led by the Indian Residential School Survivors Society, specifically for Indigenous people.
- Expanding programs such as the Giving Voice grant initiative, led by the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women (MACIW).<sup>73</sup> In 2024, MACIW allocated \$1 million to 20 organizations in southern B.C. for community-driven healing projects.
- Committing to making the justice system more responsive and safer for First Nations people affected by gender-based violence.
- Continuing implementation of *A Path Forward* to address recommendations from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- Designating 22 of 75 new sexual assault support programs specifically for Indigenous women.

Despite the growing investment, key challenges persist in supporting Indigenous-led GBV responses—especially around funding stability, governance, and culturally appropriate services. Government funding is often short-term and project-based, making it difficult for Indigenous organizations to plan long term or retain staff. While research shows that Indigenous-led approaches are more effective due to cultural relevance and community trust, grassroots organizations and community-based research remain underfunded.

A major gap lies in governance. Indigenous Peoples are still not meaningfully included in decision-making through a Nation-to-Nation framework. While consultations occur, few formal mechanisms give Indigenous communities sustained authority over GBV policy design or implementation. Without clear structures for shared governance, Indigenous leadership risks remaining symbolic without structural changes to governance.

Finally, many policies still use a one-size-fits-all approach. The diverse needs of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples—across urban, rural, and remote areas—are often not addressed by standardized programming.

## Conclusion: Strengthening Canada's GBV Response

While recent national and provincial gender-based violence (GBV) strategies signal growing political will, their long-term impact may be shaped by several implementation challenges. Short-term, project-based funding structures and a continued emphasis on reactive service delivery—rather than upstream, structural prevention—appear to limit the sustainability of current approaches. Coordination across jurisdictions remains fragmented, with mismatched timelines, differing priorities, and limited accountability mechanisms.

At both federal and provincial levels, dedicated investments in the GBV workforce, particularly regarding wages, mental health support, and long-term capacity, are not consistently prioritized in policy documents. While some initiatives reference training or capacity-building, explicit support for frontline worker well-being tends to be limited or indirect.

To address the systemic and coordination challenges identified in this report, the following recommendations are proposed:

### **1. Advance sustained intergovernmental coordination**

Move beyond voluntary declarations by developing stronger mechanisms for ongoing collaboration between federal, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments. This

includes aligning timelines, clarifying roles, and resourcing cross-jurisdictional implementation—not just bilateral agreements.

**2. Stabilize and invest in the GBV workforce**

Recognize GBV frontline workers as essential infrastructure. Fund targeted workforce strategies that address burnout, training gaps, and inequities between community-based and public-sector workers. Ensure Indigenous and culturally specific roles are valued and resourced.

**3. Strengthen Indigenous-led GBV governance**

Transition from consultative to co-governance models that give Indigenous organizations sustained leadership and control over policy design, implementation, and funding allocations. Embed Nation-to-Nation mechanisms and core funding as standard practice, not exception.

**4. Close policy–practice gaps with equity-driven implementation tools**

Ensure that well-designed strategies like the National Action Plan (NAP) and Safe & Supported B.C. are supported by resourcing for delivery, clear accountability frameworks, and mechanisms for community feedback. Emphasize practical implementation, especially in rural, remote, and under-resourced regions.

**5. Ensure funding continuity and coherence**

Replace fragmented, short-term, and project-based funding models with multi-year, predictable investments that reflect the intergenerational nature of GBV. Harmonize federal and provincial budget cycles to reduce service disruptions and enable long-term planning.

Moving forward, a more cohesive, equity-informed national framework, paired with sustained intergovernmental collaboration and stable funding arrangements, may help address these gaps. Such alignment could support more consistent service delivery and stronger structural prevention, while also recognizing the diverse needs of communities and service providers across Canada. Further policy analysis and outcome evaluation will be important to assess the effectiveness of these evolving strategies.

## Appendices

## Appendix A. Government Stakeholders in GBV Policy Implementation

This list is not exhaustive but highlights key government stakeholders involved in the implementation of gender-based violence (GBV) policies at the federal and provincial levels.

Level	Department/Agency	Role in GBV Policy
<b>Federal</b>	Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)	Leads Canada's GBV Strategy, funds community projects, policy coordination
<b>Federal</b>	Department of Justice Canada	Reforms laws, enhances legal protections, provides victim funding
<b>Federal</b>	Public Safety Canada & RCMP	Law enforcement training, human trafficking and online exploitation prevention, victim support
<b>Federal</b>	Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)	Public health response, prevention initiatives, education programs
<b>Federal</b>	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)	Supports immigrant and refugee women, temporary residence permits for victims, settlement services
<b>Federal</b>	Department of National Defence (DND) & Canadian Armed Forces	Military culture reform, support for survivors of sexual misconduct
<b>Federal</b>	Crown-Indigenous Relations & Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC)	Leads the Comprehensive Violence Prevention Strategy (CVPS) as part of the Federal Pathway under the MMIWG National Action Plan. Coordinates the federal response to the Calls for Justice, focusing on policy leadership, intergovernmental coordination, and systemic change.
<b>Federal</b>	Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)	Provides funding and service delivery for Indigenous-led GBV prevention programs. Implements community-level supports, such as shelters, trauma-informed care, and health and social services. Focuses on program delivery and frontline infrastructure.
<b>Federal</b>	National Action Plan to End GBV	Coordinates federal and provincial/territorial efforts to combat GBV
<b>BC Provincial</b>	Gender Equity Office (Ministry of Finance)	Oversees BC's GBV Action Plan, integrates gender-based policy into budgeting

<b>BC Provincial</b>	Ministry of Public Safety & Solicitor General	Leads victim services, domestic violence policing, new sexual assault response teams
<b>BC Provincial</b>	Ministry of Housing / BC Housing	Funds transition housing, shelters, long-term safe housing for survivors
<b>BC Provincial</b>	Ministry of Education and Child Care	Implements school-based prevention programs, bullying and violence education
<b>BC Provincial</b>	Ministry of Indigenous Relations & Reconciliation	Develops Indigenous-led approaches, funds culturally safe GBV interventions
<b>BC Provincial</b>	Ministry of Health	Supports trauma-informed healthcare responses, mental health supports for survivors
<b>BC Provincial</b>	Ministry of Attorney General & Family Justice	Manages family law reforms, protection orders, legal aid for GBV survivors
<b>Municipal &amp; Regional</b>	Local Policing (Municipal Police & RCMP)	Frontline policing response, domestic violence and sexual assault units
<b>Municipal &amp; Regional</b>	Municipal Government Initiatives	Creates local action plans, safety strategies, grants for GBV prevention
<b>Municipal &amp; Regional</b>	Community & Regional Organizations	Networks organizations, funds victim services, provides public education
<b>Municipal &amp; Regional</b>	Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM)	Advocates for municipal-level GBV response improvements, policy coordination

\* While this report focuses on core federal and provincial GBV strategies, it is also worth noting that multiple federal departments also outline GBV-related priorities under Canada's Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan (WPS NAP). These commitments—such as those from CIRNAC, ISC, and Public Safety Canada—reflect the cross-government scope of GBV prevention and response effort.

## Appendix B. Federal GBV Funding Breakdown (2017–2024)

Given the complexity of budgeting across multiple departments and jurisdictions, this summary offers a representative view rather than a comprehensive accounting of all GBV-related investments.

### Federal GBV Funding and Key Frontline Worker Support Initiatives by Progress Report Year:

Based on GBV Progress Report Fiscal Year	Policy/Strategy	Funding Allocation	Key Actions/Key Frontline Worker Support Initiatives (Illustrative, Not Exhaustive)
<b>2017-2018</b>	Launch of “It’s Time: Canada’s Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence”, focusing on prevention, support for survivors, and legal system responsiveness. This included establishing the GBV Knowledge Centre within Status of Women Canada.	- \$100.9M over five years - \$20.7M per year ongoing	- RCMP’s Sexual Assault Review & Victim Support Action Plan. - \$12M Victims Fund for training & legal aid pilots. - \$2.7M for judicial education on GBV.
<b>2018-2019</b>		- Additional \$86M over five years - \$20M per year ongoing	- Expanded GBV training for 1,300 frontline settlement workers. - \$2.1M/year for Federal Victims Strategy, supporting survivors of human trafficking and sexual violence.
<b>2019-2020 &amp; 2020-2021</b>		- \$219.1M over five years - \$42.7M per year ongoing	- Emergency COVID-19 funding for shelters & crisis lines. - 450 RCMP-funded community initiatives, including restorative justice training. - \$13M Victims Fund for legal aid & crisis response.
<b>2021-2022</b>	Commitment in Budget 2021 to advance towards a new National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.	- \$601.3M over five years - \$11M over five years for GBV research	- Budget 2021 funding to implement the National Action Plan to End GBV. - Strengthened survivor services, crisis hotlines, and Indigenous-led programs.

			- Bridges to Safety & Being Trauma Aware training for frontline workers.
<b>2022-2023</b>	Proposed in Budget 2022 to support provinces and territories in their efforts to implement the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence.	\$539.3 million over five years	- Budget 2022 investments for crisis services, shelters, and racialized/Indigenous/2SLGBTQIA+ survivor support. - HELP Toolkit launched for frontline workers handling family violence cases.
<b>2023-2024</b>			- Budget 2024 to address workplace harassment & online harm, with specific focus on the 2SLGBTQI+ community.

### Indirect or Parelle GBV-Related Federal Investments

Administered by various federal departments (e.g., Justice, Public Safety, CIRNAC, CMHC), these initiatives are not represented in the federal GBV budget but have significant implications for GBV prevention and survivor support.

Department	Program	Funding	GBV-Relevant Area
Justice Canada	Indigenous Family Courtwork Initiative <sup>74 75</sup>	\$24.2M (2021–2024) \$25.1M (2024–2027)	Supports for navigating justice systems
Public Safety	Indigenous Policing <sup>76</sup>	\$861M (2021–2026)	Supports culturally responsive policing and community safety services in Indigenous communities
CIRNAC	Comprehensive Violence Prevention Strategy	\$781.5M (2020–2025)	\$420M for shelters + \$31.3M WAGE prevention funding
CMHC	Indigenous Housing Strategy <sup>77</sup>	Varied	Safety and shelter access for women fleeing violence

While multiple streams of federal funding—both direct and indirect—reflect a broad commitment to addressing gender-based violence (GBV), their dispersion across various departments and strategies presents challenges in coordination, transparency, and accountability. The decentralized approach allows for flexibility and local adaptation, but also risks duplication, funding gaps, and difficulty in tracking outcomes or ensuring equitable support for frontline organizations and Indigenous-led initiatives.



## Appendix C. Provincial GBV Funding Breakdown

### British Columbia's Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Funding Priorities Under the 2023 Action Plan

Prior to the launch of the 2023 Action Plan, B.C. made interim investments such as the \$22 million allocated in Budget 2022 to support community-based sexual assault services. However, these efforts were critiqued for lacking long-term vision and were significantly expanded upon in the 2023 Safe & Supported Action Plan.<sup>78</sup> The table represents both a continuation and expansion of existing efforts and the introduction of new, targeted initiatives to comprehensively address GBV in British Columbia.

Funding Area	Investment Amount	Key Actions
Increasing Safety and Supports for Survivors <sup>79</sup>	\$54M annually	Supports over 470 victim services, violence against women, and sexual assault programs across B.C.
	\$10M annually	Expanded sexual assault services, including 70 new programs (22 for Indigenous survivors) and five sexual assault centers in Victoria, Prince George, Surrey, Vancouver, and Kamloops.
	\$1.2B over 10 years	Expansion of the Women's Transition Housing, founded as a \$734-million investment over 10 years to build and operate 1,500 transition housing, second-stage housing and long-term housing spaces for women and children leaving violence. Fund to double housing spaces to 3,000 for women and children leaving violence. Nearly 1,000 units completed or in progress.
	\$44M	Expansion of Indigenous Justice Centers to 15 locations and one virtual center by 2024-25.
Lifting Up Indigenous-Led Approaches	\$10.8M since 2022	Path Forward Community Fund supporting Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals with safety planning and capacity building.
	\$1.3M since 2017	Grants for community-led initiatives through the Minister's Advisory Council on Indigenous Women.
Breaking Cycles of Violence Through Prevention & Healing	\$2.2M since 2018	Addressing sexualized violence at post-secondary institutions through training, awareness campaigns, and reporting system improvements.

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