

# ***PREVENTING Intimate Partner Violence***

**IN**

**Two-Spirit, Nonbinary  
and Trans Communities**

**AND SUPPORTING SURVIVORS**



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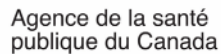
The TransFormed Project is a bilingual community-research and action initiative led by METRAC: Action on Violence in partnership with Centre Francophone du Grand Toronto.

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A partnership between:

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We extend appreciations to all members of the TransFormed Advisory Committee, for providing us with their guidance, feedback and support grounded in their service experience.

**Thank you to the following individuals and organizations for their contributions to the Project Steering Group:**

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## ***Relationships in Two-Spirit, Nonbinary, and Trans Communities***

For many people in Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans communities, relationships and dating can be just as daunting as transitioning or coming out. Whether casually dating, hooking up, engaging in short-term or long-term relationships, many Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans individuals struggle with self-acceptance and finding a partner(s) who will love and appreciate them as they are.





## *Challenges relating to:*

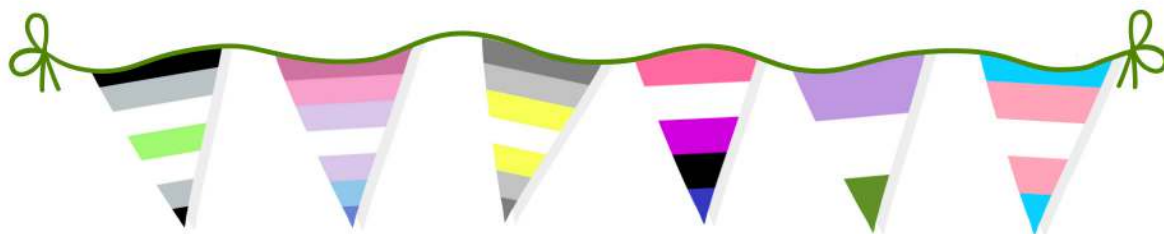
GENDER DYSPHORIA

DISCLOSURE

TRANSITIONING

ACCEPTANCE

can typically prevent many Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans people from finding and maintaining healthy, loving relationships. Despite these challenges, many Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans people still desire relationships and companionship like everyone else.



## ***Gender and Violence***

While both cisgender and non-cisgender people can all experience violence in the context of an intimate partnership, that violence often looks different for Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans people.

Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans people experience specific abuses related to their gender identity. For example, they can experience violence because of someone else's understanding of what their gender "should be", or how they express or don't express their gender.

Additionally, violence within gender diverse communities exists in such a way that community members can inflict violence onto other community members. This lateral violence is not often acknowledged.

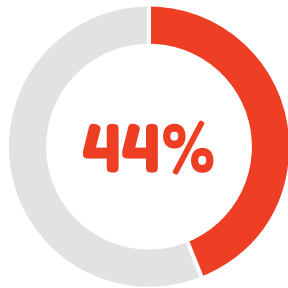
# ***Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Two-Spirit, Nonbinary, and Trans Communities***

The TransFormed Project conducted research with over 150 Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans participants from across the GTA with experiences intimate partner violence (IPV). The results demonstrate the prevalence of IPV within these communities and wide-ranging impacts it has in peoples' lives.

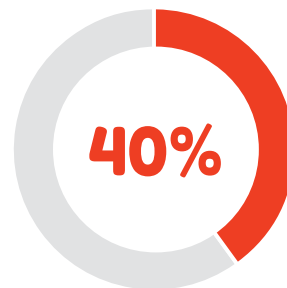
**4** out of **5**

**Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans people have  
experienced abuse in their lifetime**

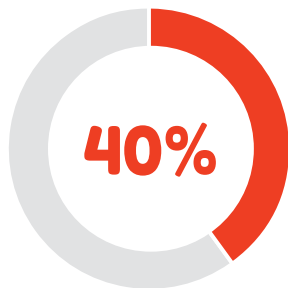
These statistics clearly demonstrate that IPV and discrimination are a common reality in the lives of Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans individuals.



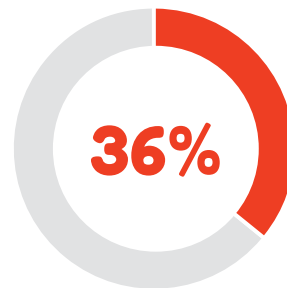
**have experienced  
intimate partner violence  
in the past 2 years**



**believed the violence they  
experienced was because of their  
gender identity or expression**



**experience transphobia  
on a regular basis**



**reported experiencing multiple  
forms of discrimination**

As a service provider it is important to be aware that in addition to gender identity there are other aspects of peoples' identities that create further vulnerability to violence. For example, trans women are at a greater risk for experiencing IPV due to transmisogyny and Black trans women are at a particularly high risk because of transmisogyny and anti-Black racism.

Race, ethnicity, age, disability, Deafness, immigration status, access to financial resources are all examples of aspects of identity that can cause further isolation and vulnerability to violence for Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans people.



# ***What is IPV?***

IPV is violence/abuse that occurs against a current or past intimate partner. Abuse is when a person(s) uses behaviours to gain power and control over another person and to cause harm. IPV can be experienced in relationships between people of the same or different genders and in relationships with two or more people Involved.





## ***Know the Signs of IPV***

IPV comes in many different forms and it can present in particular ways within Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans communities. It is important to be able to recognize the signs and offer supports.

The following checklist can be used to help guide a conversation around different forms of abuse Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans people may be experiencing.



## ***Gender identity abuse***

Unfair treatment, harm, and/or abuse  
of someone due to their gender identity.



**Gender policing:** trying to “correct” your appearance or behaviour, comparing you to cis people, telling you that your gender identity is not “real”

**Misgendering:** not using correct pronouns, refusing to use your chosen gender identity, enforcing a label on you

**Body shaming:** mocking or criticizing your body shape/size

**Outing:** revealing information about your sexual/gender identity or HIV status without your permission

**Fetishism:** being fetishized for your body, reduced to a physical aspect of yourself while other parts of you are ignored, your gender identity or transition being seen as something to be influenced by a partner’s preferences or comfort

# ***Emotional abuse***

Use of words or actions to threaten, harm, control, isolate or take away another person's sense of self-worth.



**Put-downs:** insulting or constantly criticizing you

**Isolating:** keeping you away from your support systems, making it difficult to speak up or defend yourself, not allowing you to leave your home/communicate with others

**Manipulation:** indirect tactics to control you such as implicit threats, withholding information or a partner threatening to harm themselves if you leave them or get help

**Gaslighting:** making you question your truth/reality by manipulating you through psychological means

**Stalking:** unwanted, repeated surveillance, actions, or communication to scare or harass, in person or online

**Extortion/coercion/threatening:** demanding something from you in exchange for not harming you

**Denial:** not acknowledging your reality and lived experience

**Neglect:** withholding previously agreed upon affection

**Silencing:** preventing you from speaking up/out, using social hierarchy to invalidate your experience of violence

## ***Physical abuse***

Any intentional act or threat to cause physical injury or harm to another individual or animal.



**Threats, attempts and actions** to physically harm you/a pet/service animal/ another loved one

**Neglecting** to provide physical/ medical needs

**Throwing** objects, not allowing you to leave a space

**Breaking** your assistive device

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## ***Sexual abuse***

Any sexual activity without consent.



**Being forced** to have sex or engage in sexual activities that you don't want to

**Fetishism** (see gender identity abuse)

**Manipulating** you to have sex or participate in sexual activities that you don't want to

## ***Financial abuse***

A form of abuse where one person takes control of another person's finances, property or other resources for their own benefit.



**Withholding or controlling access** to financial resources by using you or your personal possessions to make money without your consent

**Lying or withholding information** about finances and holding money as a threat against you

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## ***Cyber abuse***

The use of the internet or any tech/electronic means to harass, threaten, bully or maliciously embarrass.



**Sharing** private photos/videos without your permission

**Stalking:** Unwanted, repeated surveillance, actions, or communication to scare or harass through tech or online

**Doxxing:** Releasing private information to the public such as your address, phone number, work location, or information about your family or friends



## ***Impacts***

Experiences of IPV can have serious and wide-ranging impacts on all aspects of an individual.

**The following statistics illustrate the percentage of Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans individuals that reported the following various impacts of IPV in their lives.**



**38.1%**

**Physical health  
problem**



**89.3%**

**Mental health problem  
or psychological distress**



**41.7%**

**Substance use**



**36.9%**

**Family problems**



**41.7%**

**Housing issues**



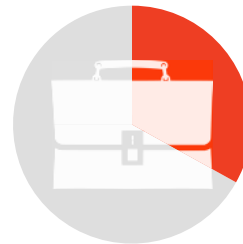
**9.5%**

**Child welfare  
involvement**



**10.7%**

**Legal issues**



**33.3%**

**Work problems**



**45.3%**

**Financial problems**



**1.2%**

**Immigration  
problems**



**28.6%**

**Spiritual or  
cultural problems**



**10.7%**

**No impacts**



**10.7%**

**Impact not listed, please  
specify: suicide, delayed  
transition, isolation**



# *Coping*

Experiencing violence can be traumatic and many Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans people are looking for strategies to cope with their experiences while also dealing with other challenges they face in daily life. As a service provider it can be important to open up conversations in an affirming and nonjudgmental manner to explore what coping strategies people are using and what additional resources, or supports, they may need.

It is clear from the research that experiences of IPV have a serious impact on the mental health of Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans people. Experiencing abuse can lead someone to experience anxiety, depression, isolation, loneliness and more. As a result, many people turn to substance use to cope. Some people use substances to cope if they cannot access other support systems or services while others may be using both substances and other services or supports.



# *Harm Reduction*

Using harm reduction strategies and models is critically important when supporting Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans individuals as they are most likely using some form of coping strategy to deal with the abuse and trauma they have experienced.

Harm reduction is a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing harms associated with substance use. It is also movement for social justice that promotes the dignity, respect and rights for people who use drugs. Anything used to reduce harmful outcomes is using a harm reduction approach.

It is important to help individuals understand what harm reduction means and what using harm reduction approaches could look like for them.



## ***Challenges and Barriers***

Our research showed that the most common experience for Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans people who face violence in their intimate relationships is experiencing barriers and challenges to accessing resources for support.



Many Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans people have disabilities that create barriers to accessing services.

Discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation, race, financial status, mental health, immigration status, Deafness, disabilities, and age all layer to create complex barriers for individuals that make accessing services difficult.

## Intersectionality



75%

**of Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans people with experiences of IPV are facing mental health challenges that create barriers to accessing services and supports.**

## **Resources are not responsive to needs of gender-diverse communities**

**33%**

**said resources were not responsive to their specific needs as a Two-Spirit, nonbinary and/or trans person**

## **Lack of Awareness of Resources**

**21%**

**did not know of any resources or supports they could go to for help**

## Fear and lack of trust



**32%**

**shared that they did not trust  
services to meet their needs**



**31%**

**shared that they had negative  
experiences using resources and  
supports in the past.**





## ***Creating Safe(r) and Inclusive Supports for Two-Spirit, Nonbinary, and Trans Survivors***

While there are many challenges that Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans communities face and many barriers to accessing service and supports, there are strategies service providers and organizations can use to decrease barriers and make their services more inclusive and accessible. The following list of suggestions come directly from the Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans participants in the TransFormed Project.



***What can service providers do to create safer, more accessible and appropriate supports for folks experiencing violence within Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans communities?***



## ***Using Inclusive Language***

As a service provider or an organization you can start by raising awareness of the importance of using appropriate and respectful language with clients. This includes making sure to ask and use the pronouns and names that an individual self-identifies with. Building rapport and trust with clients by respecting and affirming their gender identity is an integral first step in creating more gender inclusive supports and services.



## ***Creating Gender Inclusive Policies and Practices***

As our research demonstrated, many Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans survivors of violence may be unsure of whether your services are responsive to their particular needs. Creating and implementing gender inclusive policies and practices will help to reassure and demonstrate to Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans communities that your service is safe and welcoming of their identity. A **safe space** is a space that is affirming and welcoming to Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans people.



## ***Inclusive Policies and Practices:***

- ▶ Options for self-identification on intake forms
- ▶ Visible printed resources for Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans folks
- ▶ Protocols on client-staff interactions relating to disclosures of gender identity
- ▶ Protocols on addressing transphobic, homophobic and oppressive behaviours
- ▶ Having accessible washrooms and communal spaces for folks of all genders
- ▶ Creating gender inclusive (rather than gender-segregated) programs
- ▶ Engage in specific outreach to Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans communities

## ***Commit to Diversity and Visibility***

To show your commitment to diversity and visibility of Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans people:

- ▶ Incorporate peer-led approaches in programming
  - ▶ Recruit and hire folks from within Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans communities
  - ▶ Invite Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans folks to join your board of directors
- 

## ***Commit to Ongoing Learning***

Participants in the research clearly identified the need for service providers to have a greater awareness of the unique needs of Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans people. They suggested ongoing training in order for providers to be better equipped to support the unique needs of community members. Look for training opportunities that are led by Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans individuals and organizations.



## ***Identifying and Supporting Healthy Relationships***

It is also important for service providers to be able to engage in conversations about **healthy relationships** with Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans community members as a way to support survivors and also help prevent IPV. Relationship dynamics and styles can differ from person to person, group to group. The following section can support service providers in introducing conversations about healthy relationships with Two-Spirit, nonbinary and trans individuals.

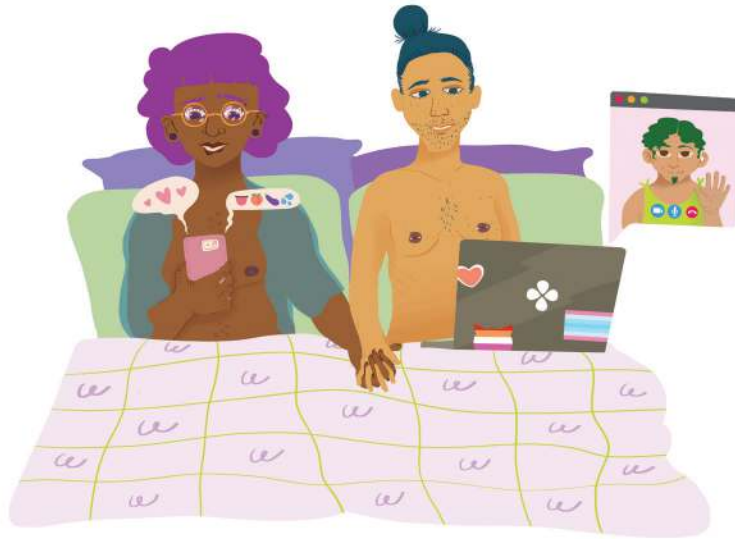


## ***Green Flags***

A healthy relationship allows partners to feel supported and connected while maintaining their independence. Communication and boundaries are two major parts of a healthy relationship. However, at the end of the day, only the individual involved in the relationship can decide what is healthy or not for them.

Just as red flags are a term to describe abusive patterns to look out for, you can use **green flags** to discuss what healthy relationship patterns may already exist in someone's relationships or that they would like to have.





## ***Green Flags in a relationship can include:***

- ▶ Respects chosen name or pronouns
- ▶ Respects boundaries, can discuss boundaries, can discuss what you like or don't like
- ▶ Able to maintain independence in doing things outside of the relationship or to spend time with people outside of the relationship
- ▶ Does not threaten to out you



- ▶ Does not pressure you into doing something you don't want to do or are not comfortable doing
- ▶ Does not invalidate your experiences or your physical/emotional self
- ▶ Able to discuss how you want to receive affection
- ▶ Able to support you during hard times, but also there to celebrate your good days
- ▶ You are having fun, you look forward to things, you are excited

- ▶ Listens to you attentively
- ▶ Room for new things and room for change and growth
- ▶ Does not project or blame
- ▶ Able to discuss your differences and where you come from in order to understand each other and figure out healthy ways to deal with differences
- ▶ Wants to learn and support you whether it is about your gender identity or your sexual orientation



***TWO-SPIRIT, NONBINARY,  
and TRANS SURVIVORS  
DESERVE SAFETY and  
AFFIRMING SUPPORTS***



While there are many factors that influence how Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans community members experience relationships and IPV, we hope this resource will help you to identify the signs of IPV, better understand the experiences of Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans survivors of IPV, and recognize the signs of healthy relationships.

We hope that this will ultimately act as a tool to help prevent IPV within Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans communities and support service providers in offering more inclusive and affirming supports.

# ***Additional Resources***

For further information check out these additional resources from the TransFormed Project:

[The TransFormed Glossary of Terms](#)

[End the Silence on Intimate Partner Violence](#)

[Healthy and Unhealthy Relationships in Two-Spirit, Nonbinary, and Trans Communities](#)





**METRAC**  
ACTION ON VIOLENCE

**METRAC: Action on Violence** is a community not-for-profit organization that works to prevent violence against women, youth, children, Two-Spirit, nonbinary, and trans people.

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Agence de la santé  
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