

Brief Submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of
Women for its Study on Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence in Canada

Prepared by the National Office of the Canadian Federation of University Women
(CFUW)

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INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) is a non-partisan, voluntary, self-funded organization with some 6,500 members across Canada working to improve the lives of women in Canada and abroad. One of our foremost priorities is working to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV), which remains pervasive in Canada and presents a significant barrier to gender equality. Given the thousands of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada, the culture of sexual violence on Canadian campuses, systemic sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, and increasing levels of gun violence threatening the safety of women and girls in Canada, CFUW calls for concerted actions at all levels of government to address GBV.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CFUW recommends the following to the Government of Canada to address intimate partner and domestic violence in Canada:

- Establish a feminist, intersectional, human right-based National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence by implementing the 100 recommended policy actions from the [Roadmap for the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence](#)
- Strengthen Canada's firearm legislation by implementing a total ban on handguns, large capacity magazines, and all assault weapons and decreasing the number of weapons in Canadian homes by continuing to sponsor gun amnesty days for disposal of recently prohibited weapons
- Implement the 231 Calls for Justice made by the [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#)

INTERSECTIONAL AND SYSTEMIC APPROACHES TO INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV) AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

IPV and domestic abuse pose significant barriers to gender equality and the safety and well-being of thousands of Canadians. The World Health Organization (WHO) considers IPV a major global public health concern as IPV has cascading impacts on victims and survivors, their families, and their communities.¹ While IPV encompasses a broad range of abusive behaviours and can happen to anyone, women disproportionately experience its most severe forms such as choking, being beaten or kicked, sexual assault, being hit with something, or threatened with a gun or knife.² According to the Canadian Femicide Observatory, women are killed by their spouses or intimate partners at more than five

¹ World Health Organization. 2017. [Violence Against Women](#). (accessed 15 March 2022).

² Burczycka, M. 2016. "Trends in self-reported spousal violence in Canada, 2014." In Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2014. Juristat. [Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X](#).

times the rate at which men are killed by an intimate partner – approximately every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner.³

Intersectionality is important to consider when discussing IPV as this violence does not impact all women the same. For example, Indigenous women are at substantially higher risk of homicide and sexual assault compared to non-Indigenous women and Indigenous women are three times as likely to report being a victim of IPV.⁴ Lesbian, bisexual, and trans women report significantly higher rates of IPV than heterosexual women.⁵ CFUW recommends comprehensive Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) be applied in the development, implementation, and monitoring of violence prevention and protection programs in order to address how those experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are impacted and to better support the needs of survivors.

In order to combat systemic problems of IPV and domestic violence, we need to promote systemic solutions. Policies that support survivors and their families, bolster prevention strategies, promote responsive legal and justice systems, and cultivate our economic and social infrastructure policies to eliminate barriers to equality and justice are all part of the solution.

GUN VIOLENCE

Since the 1989 Polytechnique Massacre, CFUW and its nearly 100 clubs across Canada have been relentless advocates for strong gun control legislation. CFUW was involved in the original process to strengthen gun control in 1995 and was also involved in a campaign to defend the long-gun registry from 2009 to 2012. The crisis of gun violence in Canada is not a new phenomenon and has only been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic – Canada ranks 5th of 23 peer countries in the OECD for age adjusted gun mortality.⁶

In Canadian households, firearms in the home are the single greatest risk factor to domestic violence turning fatal.⁷ Due to different gendered attitudes towards guns and violence, a gender analysis of the cause and consequences of gun violence is essential to inform comprehensive legislation and policies that work for everyone. While men represent the majority of victims and perpetrators of firearms-related homicides, women

³ Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability. 2021. [“Trends & Patterns in Femicide.”](#) (accessed 15 March 2022).

⁴ The Native Women’s Association of Canada. 2020. [“Fact Sheet: Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA People in Canada.”](#) (access 15 March 2022).

⁵ Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (2016). "Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2014." Juristat, Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X. 4. Boyce, J. (2016).

⁶ Austin, K., Lane, M., Adolescent Health Committee. 2018. [“The prevention of firearm injuries in Canadian youth.”](#) (accessed 15 March 2022).

⁷ Canadian Women’s Foundation. 2019. [“Gun Violence Against Women and Girls is Preventable.”](#) (accessed 15 March 2022).

are disproportionately represented in violence, intimidation and death by firearms committed in the context of IPV.⁸ Moreover, in situations of IPV where guns are available, “hostile gun display” is frequent and is used as a means of intimidation to increase an abuser’s control over their victims resulting in severe psychological trauma and perpetrating the continuum of violence.

Gun violence is a threat to the safety of women and girls in Canada and requires comprehensive public policy measures to address this burgeoning issue. CFUW reaffirms the 2019 call from our partners at the [Canadian Doctors for Protection from Guns](#) to introduce legislation and other tools to reduce the prevalence of firearms in Canada as a way to reduce gender-based violence and its deadly impacts, including a total ban on handguns, large capacity magazines, and all assault weapons.

⁸ Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability. 2021. [“Trends & Patterns in Femicide.”](#) (accessed 15 March 2022).