

Intimate Partner Violence and Men as Victims

Contributed by: Dr. Amy Bender and Dr. Robbie Babins-Wagner









In 2018, Calgary Counselling Centre (CCC) and University of Calgary researchers partnered with the RESOLVE researchers and community partners from Manitoba and Saskatchewan to work on a study about male victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). This study, *The multi-faces of intimate partner violence across the prairie provinces: Men as victims*, was the response to a special call-out by Prairieaction Foundation for tri-provincial research to examine men as victims of IPV. Semi-structured interviews with male victims of IPV were conducted. Along with this, focus groups and individual interviews with service providers occurred to scan the environment of existing services for men who experience IPV and compare agency statistics. The goal was to understand men's experiences and how we can better serve these men in our community.

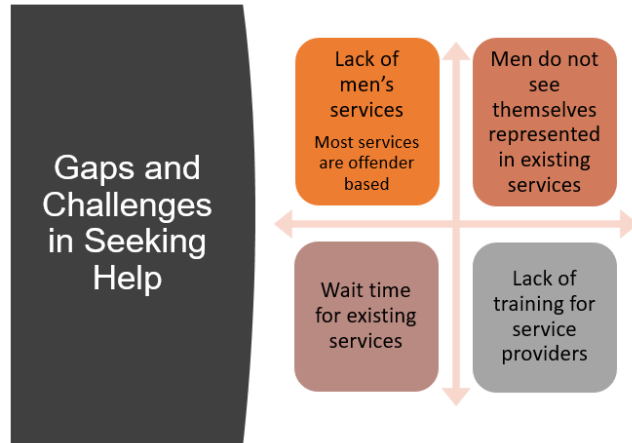
In Alberta, we interviewed 16 men (15 male in-person interviews at Calgary Counselling Centre and 1 male telephone interview) and 11 service providers from Calgary and surrounding areas which comprised of: 11 total participants, 4 service provider focus groups, and 7 represented agencies [Calgary Police Services, Cantara Safe House (Women's shelter), City of Edmonton (Citizen Services), Wheatland Crisis Society, Calgary Counselling Centre, Red Deer Women's Outreach Centre, Medicine Hat Women's Shelter Society]. This data was combined with our RESOLVE collaborators in Manitoba and Saskatchewan for a total of 45 male victim interviews and 41 service provider interviews.

The demographics of the male victims included: average age of 44 years old with a range from 20-71. Over half (56%) of the men completed post-secondary education, and 67% were employed or retired, with an average annual income of \$55,000 per year. 89% of men were no longer in an abusive relationship with their partner. 36% had a previous relationship in which they experienced IPV. The average length of this relationship was 9.5 years and 69% of these men had children with about a third (29%) having full-time or shared custody arrangements. The top 3 types of abuse reported was (100%) emotional abuse, (84%) physical abuse, and (67%) financial abuse. Many of the male victims reported physical and mental health problems including lost/gained weight, headaches, sleep problems, worsening health conditions, loss of identity, fear, anxiety, depression, suicide thoughts/attempts, PTSD, and drug and alcohol use.

Barriers to seeking help: When men did reach out, they mostly turned to informal sources of support such as family and friends who directed them to more formal support services. We found that when men disclosed, IPV was often not the presenting issue, and it often took a severe incident or crisis for the men to disclose.

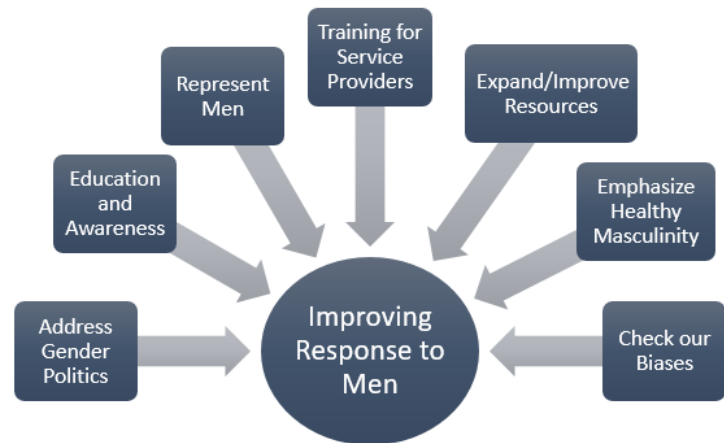
Barriers to
Seeking
Help

-  Disbelief/Denial of victimization
-  Shame/Stigma Even greater for LGBTQ2S+
-  Fear of not being believed
-  Fear of being blamed/charged
-  Financial barriers
-  Don't know where to seek help/can't find services/resources
-  Love/Commitment
-  Fear for their children/losing their children



Gaps or Challenges in Help-seeking: We asked if current services met men's needs and the response was a resounding "NO"! Several gaps and challenges in services for men were identified by both the men and service providers. Another challenge was a bias within the system and service providers. ***"There's this widespread notion that domestic violence is something exclusively that men do to women, but not on the flip side. This notion is widespread and exists with the justice system, within our legal authorities, within different systems and it's deeply perpetuated."*** (Service Provider)

The knowledge gained from this study on the experiences of male victims of IPV and what we can do to improve our response to men is significant. We received many suggestions from men and service providers to improve our response to male victims of IPV. Our most common response to this question was improving public education and awareness that men can be victims.



We are currently working on publishing the results of this study and would like to thank the financial support of Prairieaction Foundation, our community partners, research assistants, service providers who generously shared their time and expertise, and most importantly the men who shared their stories.