

How Do Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Domestic Abuse (Domestic Violence), Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Differ?

All four terms are more frequently finding their way into the lay press. Part of the reason we are seeing more articles and violence specifically 'named' is because of the efforts to have IPV designated an epidemic, not only in Ontario but across the country and internationally.

The four terms, though, are different, although there is overlap. Some may argue that separating the terms is merely semantics or the dissimilarities are too subtle to worry about when identifying the violence. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the distinctions and use the terms appropriately because of their potential implications on policy, care providers, and survivors.

Here are how the terms are currently defined by women's groups and victim's advocates.

Gender Based Violence

GBV is the broadest of the four terms. The UN definition of GBV is 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women ... whether occurring in public or private life ... It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms.'

However, GBV also applies to violence experienced by gender non-conforming people. It is important to recognize this because their voices and access to care may be marginalized due to their gender identity. Further, conceptions of gender vary greatly around the world such that the man-woman binary present in Western society simply does not always fit other cultures.

GBV is often intersectional so that women with disabilities, Indigenous women, racialized women, trans and non-binary people, and women who are homeless or underhoused are more likely to be victims of GBV.

GBV includes the types of abuse that women and girls are at highest risk of experiencing. It can take physical and emotional forms, such as: name-calling, hitting, pushing, blocking, stalking/criminal harassment, rape, sexual assault, control, and manipulation. Many forms of this abuse are against the law in Canada.

Forms of GBV include:

- Femicide, the killing of a woman because of her gender
- Domestic violence, including familiar and intimate partner violence
- Violence and harassment in the workplace
- Sexual violence
- War crimes, including rape
- Sexual trafficking
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced marriage and child marriage
- Honor killings
- Psychological and emotional violence

- Patrimonial violence (the violation of a woman's property rights)

Violence Against Women and Girls

Violence against women is more specific than GBV in that it only applies to people who identify or present as women. VAWG includes many types of violence, from female genital mutilation to psychological abuse. Its most extreme form is femicide.

Women experience the vast majority of gender-based violence, so to that extent, GBV and VAWG overlap.

Intimate Partner Violence

In the Ontario Council IPV Toolkit, we use the UN definition of IPV as: a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abuse includes physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This takes in any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone.

IPV can occur between partners of the same sex (gay or lesbian) who are engaged in an intimate relationship.

The UN also uses the term domestic abuse interchangeably with intimate partner abuse but the two are becoming separated as we begin to better delineate the various forms of abuse.

Domestic Abuse (Domestic Violence)

Domestic abuse or domestic violence is broader than intimate partner violence and encompasses violence toward others sharing a living space, including children, siblings, or grandparents.

Sources

<https://www.usaforunfpa.org/what-is-gender-based-violence-gbv/>

<https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/gender-based-violence/>

<https://gbv.wilsoncenter.org/what-gender-based-violence>