

Gender-based safety and violence in New Brunswick



Our Resonate initiative identified safety and violence as a top issue* for women in New Brunswick. Here is a closer look at the data that shaped that finding.

Of participants in our survey for women:

- 42% said violence was one of the three most significant issues that needed to be addressed to improve the lives of women in New Brunswick as a group; and
- 29% said violence was one of the three most significant problems they'd faced in their own lives in the past 12 months as women living in New Brunswick.

Many of the stories that participants shared highlight how violence intersects with other challenges. Women described how economic insecurity, poverty, poor housing, and limited support services made them more vulnerable to violence and made it more difficult – and at times impossible – to access support after violence or to leave violent situations and relationships. Women also shared stories of not being believed or being blamed for violence when they told others, including police, about their experiences.

Data from the survey for individuals belonging to gender minorities:

Violence and safety weren't explicitly named frequently enough to emerge as a top issue* for individuals belonging to gender minorities. Violence and safety did, however, come up often in the more detailed examples and stories that participants shared.

Stories of discrimination or challenges around mental health were particularly likely to also reference violence and safety. In these stories, participants described discrimination as the root of the violence they experience and that a decline in their mental health is a direct effect of that violence. Our analysis is that individuals belonging to gender minorities were experiencing violence and challenges to their safety at higher rates than they named it as a top issue.

*Top issues were identified based on responses to two questions in the Resonate surveys:

- What are the top three challenges that need to be addressed to improve the lives of women/ individuals belonging to gender minorities in New Brunswick as a group?
- What were the three most significant problems participants had faced in their own lives in the past 12 months as women/individuals belonging to a gender minority living in New Brunswick?

Depending on which version of the survey the participant completed, the questions referred to either women or individuals belonging to gender minorities.

In separate questions, participants were asked to provide examples of issues and challenges in their lives and/or the lives of people they know. Their examples often touched on multiple issues and challenges.

Women's stories

Of those women who listed violence and safety as top issues or challenges, 56% wrote or spoke about violence in general. More specific concerns that women shared included sexual violence (26%), intimate partner or domestic violence (14%), and violence in the workplace (4%). These general and specific concerns also included mentions of online violence, elder abuse, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

General violence

"Many women I know have experienced harassment or assault, particularly out at clubs. It makes it hard to enjoy going out. Having to constantly create mental contingency plans, scope out exit routes, and evaluate a man's character within minutes is exhausting..."

"No one who lives in fear for their personal safety and mental health can thrive or help their families or communities thrive. Violence and abuse hurts us all."

"When doing my laundry in residence, a male student... once pushed me against the wall in front of other students and assaulted me. Even though I was screaming for help, no one stopped him. It was about as blatant as it gets. I believe people need to be educated on what to do to help someone in a crisis situation and not be a bystander..."

Sexual violence

"Sexual violence occurs so frequently that women often don't even realize they have been sexually assaulted. This largely stems from men feeling entitled to women's bodies."

"I experienced a sexual assault, but have received negative responses from multiple people that I trusted and told. They either did not believe me or brushed it off as if it were my fault. It took me months to work up the courage to talk to a professional about the incident."

"Being a victim of multiple sexual assaults, I have had both city police and RCMP blatantly tell me I was "lying". This has led to distrust of the system, PTSD and other mental health issues. Which are not being adequately dealt with as our mental health services waiting lists exceed a year in some cases."

Workplace violence

"...my co-worker confided in me that our boss had assaulted her at work, in front of some customers, and in plain view of the security cameras he had all over the bar, and nobody helped her... In the end she confronted him about what had happened but never took any other action legal or otherwise. I've quit in the interim. She still works there."

"Male patients feel they can comment on my looks, tell me they'd take me home to bed, and it's just "a joke" and a "compliment". No it's sexual harassment. But as a frontline healthcare worker, there is little recourse except to suck it up."

Intimate partner or domestic violence

"Personally, I have been in a situation which mirrors the experiences of my friends; I was raped and abused within a relationship. The relationship continued because as a student I needed the stability of that relationship. The current student loan system disadvantages me greatly limiting the legal amount of work I can have, pushing me and others into sex work and other professions. As well as making any partner who offers assistance a lifeline."

"There's no help for a 50+ disabled woman, that was and still am in an abusive relationship. Even though I am not longer living in the abusive home, I am being affected by emotional abuse and stalking..."

"Services for violence against women in NB have little resources. Some women I know weren't able to have a spot in a shelter. And even those who did get a room, the staff had a hard time to offer them long term services, including ones to address their trauma (mental health). The staff have the resources to help them find housing, but they don't have the means to help them more long term."*



What women said would make their own lives or lives of NB women easier:

"The world needs to be safer for women: sexual violence education and prevention programs, systems structured so that women can easily and safely report assaults and harassment and be believed, counselling and treatment and legal options for those who need them..."

"Unfortunately, the real solution to this is a change in cultural norms, which can only be changed by incremental shifts. These shifts come from, for e.g. not having judges in our legal system that say a sexual assault victim should have "kept her knees together". Educational means, from a young age, may be helpful."

"Access to education (training, support, awareness) based on their experience and potential. Make resources for this more accessible, for all women in their diversity." *

"Access to daycare services at affordable prices, would help women of NB at an economic level, to pursue education if they need it, to leave a situation of violence, to not live under the poverty line., etc..." *

According to the most recently published Statistics Canada data:

Nationally:

- Women self-report** experiencing violence at significantly higher rates than what is reported to police. The gap between self-reporting and policing reporting of violence against women is largest for spousal and sexual violence.¹
- Over 80% of police-reported intimate partner homicides victims are women.²
- Aboriginal women self-report experiencing violent victimizations at a rate 2.7 times higher than non-Aboriginal women (219 incidents vs 81 incidents per 1 000 population).³
- Women who identify as homosexual or bisexual self-report experiencing violence at more than 3.5 times the rate of those who identify as heterosexual (281 incidents vs 75 incidents per 1 000 population).⁴

- Women with a disability are twice as likely as women who do not have a disability to be a victim of police-reported violent crime (137 incidents vs 65 incidents per 1 000 population).⁵
- As workers, women self-report higher rates of all forms of workplace violence than men (18.7% versus 12.2%).⁶

In New Brunswick:

- The rate of police-reported intimate partner violence and other forms of violence (excluding sexual violence) experienced by women is higher than the national average (519 and 683 per 100 000 population compared to 487 and 592 per 100 000 respectively).⁷
- The rate of police-reported sexual assault is more than ten times higher for women than men (71.6 per 100 000 population compared to 6.1 per 100 000).⁸

¹ Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

² Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey, 2007-2017.

³ Statistics Canada. (2017) *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report, Seventh Edition*. Catalogue no. 89-503-X ISSN 1719-4407

⁴ Statistics Canada. (2017) *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report, Seventh Edition*. Catalogue no. 89-503-X ISSN 1719-4407

⁵ Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), 2014.

⁶ Source: General Social Survey (Canadians at Work and Home), 2016.

⁷ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Trend Database, 2017.

⁸ Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Trend Database, 2017.

** Self-reported means data collected directly from participants by Statistics Canada via surveys (as opposed to data drawn from police-reporting). Participants may report experiences in surveys that they did not report to the police.

Resonate

From late 2017 to early 2018, the New Brunswick Women's Council's Resonate initiative gathered information from more than 1 400 New Brunswick women and individuals belonging to gender minorities as well as more than 35 organizations serving women and addressing gender-equality issues.

This is the second in a series of info sheets that take a deeper look at that data collected and share more stories from women. Read more information about Resonate's findings and methodology at www.resonatenbresonances.ca

The New Brunswick Women's Council

The New Brunswick Women's Council is an independent government agency. The council provides government with advice and raises public awareness about women's equality.

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