

Disability & Gender-Based Violence

Accessibility, Assistive Tech, & Inclusion Toolkit

In this info sheet you can find information about:

- disability and gender
- the role technology plays in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) when it is misused by abusers
- how technology can be used to help support survivors.

Quick Facts

Women with disabilities are at high risk of violence. At the same time, they are more marginalized, and face greater barriers to receiving support. The DABC [1] reports that:

$\frac{1}{5}$

One fifth of Canadian women live with a disability, but between **40-60% experience violence.**

4X

Women with disabilities may be as much as **4 times more likely** to experience sexual assault.



People with disabilities were **50-100% more likely** than their counterparts without disabilities **to have experienced violence by a spouse.**



Women with disabilities experience **high barriers to accessing support for violence.** This includes lack of access to information about services, fear of being institutionalized, adequate transportation, fear of losing benefits. They are also less likely to report violence, and may fear they will not be believed.

Women with disabilities' experiences are also shaped by other parts of their identity like **race, class, or geographic location.**

All of these factors interact together– some parts of a person's identity might offer a person more privilege that can help protect them, whereas other parts might mean they face greater marginalization, or extra barriers to support.

For example, Indigenous women with disabilities living in a large city will have different experiences than a Settler woman with a disability living in a rural location.

Supporting Survivors

Considerations for supporting Survivors with Disabilities:

- For some survivors, their home is their most accessible place. They may have expensive equipment and spaces set up to support their personal needs, and it might be very logistically challenging to access support services. This might also add an additional layer of stress to the survivor leaving their home. [2]
- Disabled women may receive less education about healthy relationships or sexual health when it is assumed they won't have relationships, or be less believed when they seek help for abuse. [3]
- Survivors may experience violence from partners (IPV), but it may also come from family members, or "caring" roles like care workers, hospital staff, or support service staff. [4]

"In 5 years I have had few clients I can think of that this relates to, makes me think this population is very isolated and probably under serviced."

– BC Frontline Worker

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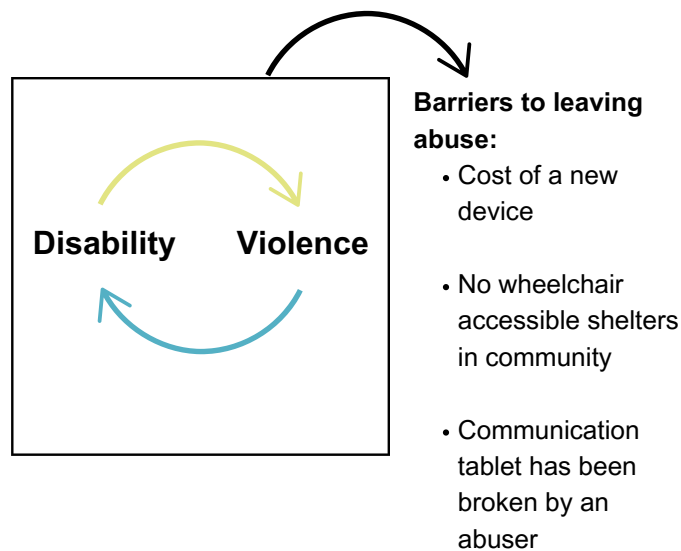
Disabled women face **higher rates of gender-based violence**

Disability **Violence**

Survivors may **become disabled through violence**.
E.g., a survivor receives a traumatic brain injury as a result of physical violence from an abuser.

Women with disabilities often face additional barriers to reaching out for help, which makes it more challenging to find an exit route to escape violence.

- Women with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and so might have less financial means to support themselves once they leave (e.g., costs of a new phone or wheelchair), which adds financial barriers to leaving [5]
- Services might be inaccessible (for instance, if transition house units are all on the second floor, or fire alarms rely entirely on sound) [6]
- Women might be isolated and unable to reach out for assistance (e.g., their communication device has been broken by an abuser, there is no accessible bus service to their remote community).



For the full toolkit, visit BCSTH's [Accessibility, Assistive Tech, & Inclusion page](#).

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Reference List:

- [1] *Right to be Safe: Creating Inclusive Services for Women with Disabilities Experiencing Violence*. Disability Alliance of BC. (2016). Retrieved from <https://disabilityalliancebc.org/rbbsguideupdate/>
- [2] With thanks to Dr. Jewelles Smith of Procne Navigation- the considerations shared in this box were shared in a BCSTH webinar delivered by Dr. Smith. Procne Navigation can be found at <https://www.procnenavigation.com>
- [3] [4] *Addressing Sexual Violence and Promoting the Sexual Rights of Women Labelled with Intellectual Disabilities*. The Learning Network. (2023). Retrieved from https://gbvlearningnetwork.ca/our-work/issuebased_newsletters/issue-41/index.html
- [5] *Disability Poverty In Canada: A 2023 Report Card*. Disability Without Poverty. (2023). Retrieved from https://www.disabilitywithoutpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/DWP-Report-Card-23-FINAL_compressed.pdf; *The Facts about Women and Poverty In Canada*. Canadian Women's Foundation. (2024). Retrieved from <https://canadianwomen.org/the-facts/womens-poverty/#:~:text=Historically%2C%20women%20with%20disabilities%20have,Council%20of%20Canadians%20with%20Disabilities>
- [6] *Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017-2022*. Statistics Canada. (2023). Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231201/dq231201b-eng.htm>