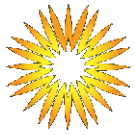


WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO HEALTH CANADA ON THE 2026 MEN AND BOYS' HEALTH STRATEGY

June 1st, 2026

RESEARCH & POLICY





Written Submission to Health Canada on the 2026 Men and Boys' Health Strategy

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WomanACT welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Canada's first Men and Boys' Health Strategy. As an organization dedicated to ending gender-based violence (GBV) and advancing gender equity, [engaging men and boys](#) in preventing Gender-based Violence (GBV), including Family Violence (FV) and Intimate partner Violence (IPV) is both a [public health priority](#) and a critical component of violence prevention.

Consistent with [Public Health's approaches to gender-based violence](#), primary prevention should be a central pillar of this strategy, focusing on preventing violence before it occurs by addressing root causes, strengthening protective factors, and creating conditions that support healthy, equitable relationships. Gender-based violence is shaped by individual, relationship, community, and societal factors. As such, [effective prevention](#) requires coordinated action across sectors, including education, health care, community services, workplaces, recreation, and justice systems.

While gender-based violence [disproportionately affects women and girls](#), a comprehensive approach to men's health should also examine how harmful gender norms shape men's experiences, attitudes, relationships, and help-seeking behaviours, while supporting their role as allies in prevention efforts. Improving men's health should not be viewed as separate from advancing gender equality. Rather, these goals are interconnected. [Research](#) consistently demonstrates that restrictive gender norms and harmful expectations of masculinity can negatively affect men's mental health, help-seeking behaviours, substance use, relationships, and overall well-being. These same norms can contribute to gender-based violence across the continuum, including intimate partner violence, family violence, sexual violence, harassment, and other forms of violence rooted in gender inequities.

A successful men's health strategy should adopt a [gender-transformative approach](#) that promotes [healthy masculinities](#), strengthens relationships, supports emotional well-



being, and engages men and boys as partners in creating safer, healthier communities. Promoting [healthy masculinities](#) can strengthen protective factors such as empathy, social connectedness, emotional regulation, help-seeking, and healthy relationship skills, while reducing risk factors associated with violence perpetration and poor health outcomes. These qualities are not only protective factors for men's health; they are also foundational to preventing violence and fostering healthy relationships.

Traditional expectations that men should be self-reliant, emotionally stoic, dominant, or invulnerable can [discourage help-seeking](#) and contribute to poorer health outcomes. Men are less likely to access preventive health services, seek support for mental health challenges, or discuss experiences of trauma and violence. Boys and men should be supported to develop emotional literacy, empathy, conflict resolution skills, and healthy relationship competencies throughout their lives. Strengthening these skills through early and ongoing upstream intervention can help address known risk factors for intimate partner violence, foster respectful and equitable relationships, and contribute to long-term violence prevention.

A [life-course approach](#) to primary violence prevention should begin early and continue across all stages of life. By promoting healthy relationships, consent, emotional literacy, and gender-equitable attitudes during childhood and adolescence, and reinforcing these protective factors through adulthood, policies can address root causes before violence occurs and support long-term health and well-being. [Comprehensive healthy relationship education](#), consent education, and gender equality education can help boys and young men develop the skills needed to build healthy relationships and challenge harmful stereotypes before they become entrenched.

A national strategy should recognize community organizations as essential partners in both health promotion and gender-based violence prevention and provide sustained funding to support their work. WomanACT has consistently emphasized the importance of partnerships with community-based organizations that are uniquely positioned to deliver culturally responsive, trauma-informed programs that promote mental health, healthy relationships, and violence prevention. Meaningful collaboration recognizes their role in addressing root causes such as isolation, trauma, and harmful gender norms, while ensuring programs reflect community realities.

An [intersectional](#) and GBA Plus-informed approach is essential to understanding how [systems of privilege and oppression](#) shape health outcomes and experiences of violence. Many of the social and structural determinants that negatively affect men's health—including poverty, housing instability, discrimination, trauma, and social



exclusion— are also recognized risk factors for gender-based violence and disproportionately impact women, girls, and gender-diverse people. Addressing these shared determinants through health equity-focused prevention strategies can improve population health outcomes while advancing gender equality and safety.

Finally, improving the health of men and boys should not be viewed as a binary choice between men's health and women's health. Advancing men's well-being and advancing gender equality are complementary goals. Efforts to promote healthy masculinities, strengthen relationships, improve mental health, and prevent violence benefit everyone.

Canada has an opportunity to develop a men and boy's health strategy that advances health equity through a public health approach grounded in primary prevention, gender-transformative practice, and the social determinants of health. By addressing the root causes of both poor health outcomes and gender-based violence rather than symptoms alone, Canada can strengthen protective factors, reduce inequities, and foster healthier, safer communities for everyone.

Sincerely,

Harmy Mendoza

Executive Director of WomanACT