

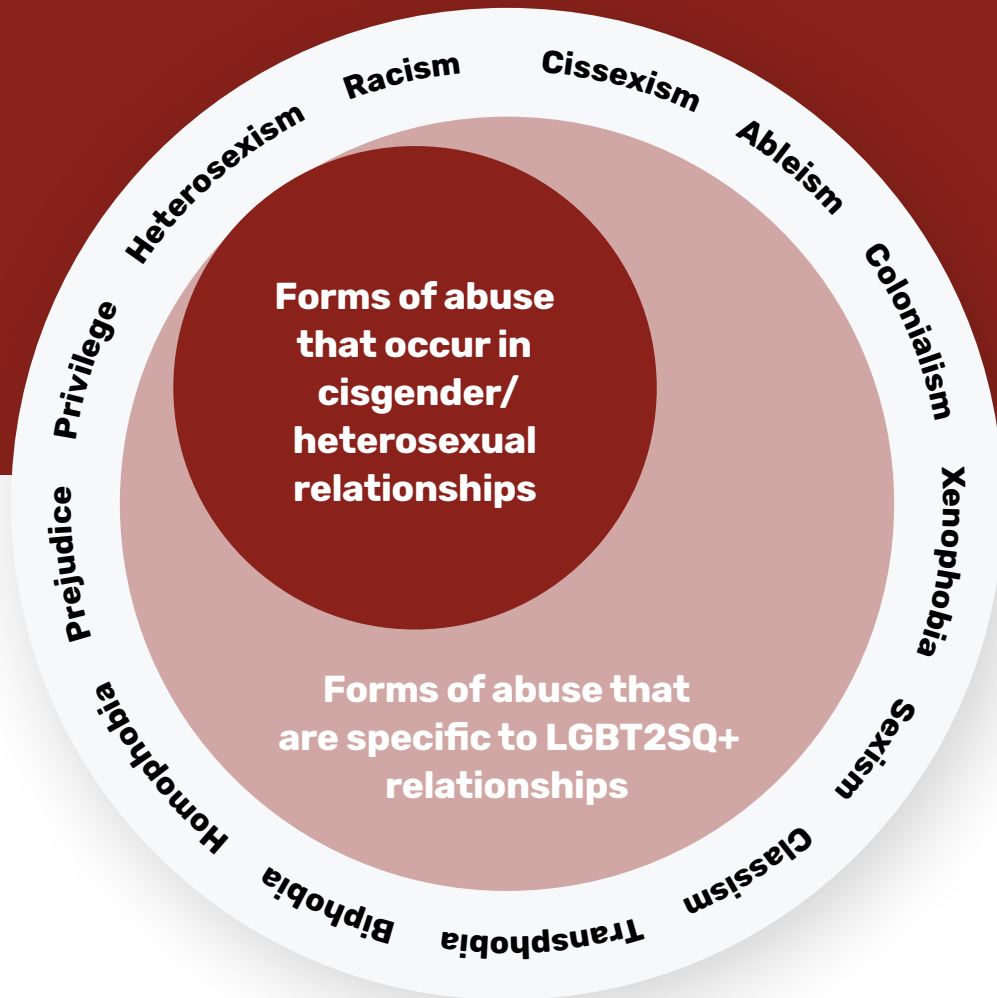
**Addressing Intimate Partner Violence in  
LGBT2SQ+ Communities Across BC**

# Specific Forms of Abuse in LGBT2SQ+ Relationships

The purpose of this resource is to highlight the specific forms of abuse and tactics of control used within Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Two-Spirit, and Queer (LGBT2SQ+) relationships. It aims to help strengthen your existing knowledge about Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in cisgender and heterosexual relationships and raise awareness about the unique ways power and control can be used in LGBT2SQ+ relationships.

## **Guiding Principles**

- IPV in LGBT2SQ+ relationships refers to abuse from a current or former romantic or sexual partner in which one person identifies under the umbrella of LGBT2SQ+.
- LGBT2SQ+ people in abusive relationships may experience the same forms of abuse as heterosexual and cisgender people in addition to forms of abuse specific to LGBT2SQ+ relationships. Models of heterosexual/cisgender IPV are insufficient to address the complexities of IPV in LGBT2SQ+ communities.
- Systems of structural power such as heterosexism, cissexism, biphobia, transphobia, and homophobia surround each form of abuse and contribute to the complexity of IPV in LGBT2SQ+ relationships.



## Specific Forms of Abuse

In addition to forms of abuse commonly experienced in heterosexual/cisgender relationships, there are specific forms of abuse within LGBT2SQ+ relationships<sup>1</sup>:

### Psychological Abuse

- Denying the existence of the LGBT2SQ+ relationship
- Threatening to “out” their partner to their family, friends, employer(s), church, cultural community, or the authorities in their home country
- Intentionally using the incorrect pronouns for their partner (misgendering) or using a previous name that their partner no longer uses (deadnaming)

- Normalizing abuse in LGBT2SQ+ relationships or minimizing abuse as “drama”
- Denying their partner access to cultural community or Indigenous ways of knowing by reinforcing fears of homophobia, transphobia, and/or biphobia
- Reinforcing and/or exploiting their partner’s internalized homophobia, transphobia, or biphobia (e.g., by saying they deserve the abuse because of their LGBT2SQ+ identity)
- Using negative stereotypes within the relationship
- Instilling transphobic, heteronormative, and/or biphobic ideas in children or threatening their partner’s access to the children due to their LGBT2SQ+ identity
- Controlling their partner’s gender expression (e.g., not allowing them to wear gender-affirming products like binders, breastforms, packers, etc., and/or controlling their hair, clothing, etc.)
- Accusing their partner of not “really” being LGBT2SQ+ or telling them that they are not a “real” woman, man, lesbian, gay man, etc.
- Preventing their partner’s access to the LGBT2SQ+ community or spreading rumours and lies to damage their partner’s reputation within the community
- Using privilege to “pass” (that is, not be recognizable as an LGBT2SQ+ person) to leverage systems of power

### **Sexual Abuse**

- Touching gendered body parts without consent or with the knowledge that they are “off limits” (e.g., chest, groin, etc.)
- Exploiting their partner’s lack of knowledge about LGBT2SQ+ lives and telling them that “this is just how LGBT2SQ+ sex / a LGBT2SQ+ relationship is”
- Eroticizing/fetishizing someone’s body against their will
- Using the wrong terms to refer to a partner’s body parts (e.g., using the word “penis” when their partner uses the word “vagina”)

### **Physical Abuse**

- Physically assaulting gendered parts of a person's body (e.g., chest, groin, etc.)

### **Spiritual Abuse**

- Preventing their partner from practicing their spirituality (e.g., saying that their beliefs are incompatible with a LGBT2SQ+ identity)

### **Financial Abuse**

- Denying their partner access to medical benefits to prevent access to gender-affirming health care (including hormones, surgery, and mental health services)

## **Considerations and Complexities**

- Systems of oppression show up in all sorts of ways in relationships. These render some groups to be disproportionately targeted due to the social locations they inhabit. (For more information, please refer to EVA BC's Foundations for Supporting LGBT2SQ+ Individuals resource.)
- Due to systemic inequality, LGBT2SQ+ people may not automatically recognize abusive behaviour or label their experiences as IPV or abuse. Rather than enforcing ideas of abuse, consider what they might need in order to start to recognize the harmful behaviour. Explore how they feel and/or how the systems they live in may be impacting their expectations in relationships.
- Be aware of patterns of mutual abuse as it is not uncommon for both partners in a LGBT2SQ+ relationship to use violence. It is very important to consider the full context of the abuse. For example, were there any precipitating events (such as psychological abuse) that led to physical violence? Ensure that you are not relying on gender presentation to determine who is the abuser and who is the victim/survivor in a given situation. Be aware of the possibility that both partners may access the same service.

## Deepening Your Practice

- How might the discrimination and disempowerment LGBT2SQ+ people face lead to them enacting abusive behaviours in intimate relationships?
- How might a limited understanding of specific forms of abuse create barriers for LGBT2SQ+ people in recognizing abuse and seeking support?
- How might you support someone who is abusing their LGBT2SQ+ partner?
- What would you do in a situation in which two partners in a relationship accessed your service? How would you maintain safety and confidentiality in this instance? What actions could you take that might increase safety for both partners?

## Self-Reflection Questions

- How do you define abusive behaviour? How does this definition include/exclude identities and experiences outside of cisgender/heterosexual relationships?
- What misconceptions might you hold about IPV in LGBT2SQ+ relationships? A common myth is that IPV in LGBT2SQ+ relationships is less severe than IPV in cisgender/heterosexual relationships.
- How might incorporating more understanding of LGBT2SQ+ specific issues impact the work you do with heterosexual/cisgender people?

## References

<sup>1</sup>Roe & Jagodinsky. (2015). *Power and Control Wheel for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Relationships*. Adapted from the Power & Control and Equity Wheels developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (Duluth, Minnesota). <https://www.loveisrespect.org/lir-files/LGBT-Power-and-Control-Wheel.pdf>

 [www.endingviolence.org](http://www.endingviolence.org)

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