

# Intersectionality Gives Us Insights on How to Prevent Violence

## What is intersectionality?

**Intersectionality** refers to the ways multiple forms of oppression interact with one another to affect individuals and communities. Each aspect of a person's identity, like their race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, and age has a different effect on how that person is treated in their daily life by the people, systems, and structures around them, which can have a powerful impact on health. When a person belongs to more than one group experiencing discrimination or inequity, this can impact their health in unique ways by multiplying or compounding the amount of inequality they face. Intersectionality is a critical lens for prevention work because it shows how different forms of oppression work together to create different types of advantage and disadvantage.

## History of the term intersectionality

Black feminists, scholars, and activists have a long history of exploring the ways people are affected by combined forms of oppression. For example, the Combahee River Collective Statement published in 1977 discussed how racial, sex, and class oppression were experienced simultaneously by Black women. The term intersectionality was coined by American scholar and civil rights lawyer Prof. Kimberlé Crenshaw, J.D., L.L.M. in 1989.<sup>i,ii</sup> Crenshaw noticed that Black women were frequently excluded from discussions about feminist theory and antiracist politics, which focused on the experiences and needs of white women and Black men, respectively. She argued that racism and sexism interact with one another to create unique and stronger forms of discrimination. Crenshaw urged feminists to include an analysis of race, and Black activists to include an analysis of sexism and patriarchy, so that Black women would be included in both of their visions of liberation.

## Implications for violence prevention

Intersectionality helps explain a deep pattern of increases in inequities that follow lines of societal power differences. This includes sharp increases in violence victimization. A study published in 2024 examined rates of violence among 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade youth in Minnesota who took the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) in 2019.<sup>iii</sup> The study found that 7.6% of all respondents had experienced intimate partner sexual violence. However, this percent increased to 32% for respondents who identified as Black, Indigenous, or students of color (BIPOC), plus who were lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, or questioning (LGBQ+), plus who were labeled male at birth, plus who were transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, or unsure of their gender identity.



**7.6% of all teens experienced IPSV, but within that there were specific groups where the percent was much higher.**

**32% of teens assigned male at birth, who identified as LGBTQ+, transgender or were unsure of their gender identity, and who were BIPOC experienced IPSV. The findings of this analysis confirmed what preventionists already know: young people who experience multiple forms of oppression report higher rates of violence victimization.**

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**Violence is never caused by victims or their identities.** Violence inequities are caused by societal power differences by race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, age, and more. In her 1989 paper, Prof. Crenshaw explains that these inequities are created through the harmful policies, beliefs, actions, procedures, structures, systems, environments, histories, and other elements that shape and uphold societal power differences. It is the responsibility of violence preventionists to include analyses of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, xenophobia, classism, and other forms of oppression in violence prevention work.

## Take action to prevent violence

- Join the Sexual Violence Prevention Network (SVPN) to connect with others and learn about prevention resources. Sign up on the [SVPN webpage \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/svp/svpn.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/svp/svpn.html).
- Read the reports under the “Resources on inequities in Minnesota” section below.
- Minnesota has a wealth of culturally and community specific programs, organizations, and resources. Identify some in your area, read their online materials, sign up for their newsletters, and reach out to learn how you can support their work and collaborate.
- Talk about intersectionality. Include its history and acknowledge Prof. Kimberlé Crenshaw and other Black feminists and scholars who developed the idea.
- Identify three ideas of what intersectionality might mean for your role(s) or current projects in violence prevention. Share these ideas with a colleague or friend. Ask them to come up with three ideas to share back with you. This helps normalize using an intersectional lens.
- Leverage the power and privilege you have in your role(s) to ensure your work is rooted in intersectionality. For example, an action step for a manager at a healthcare clinic might be to meet with upper leadership about modifying an existing procedure or policy based on input from partner organizations or community members.
- Advocate for a local policy that will advance equity, economic justice, or connected communities.

## Resources on inequities in Minnesota

Minnesota leaders and communities have created several data resources that help explain how intersecting systems of oppression affect Minnesotans. Below are a few examples:

- [A Report on Violence Against Asian Women and Children in Minnesota](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/equity/reports/violence/finalreport.pdf)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/equity/reports/violence/finalreport.pdf>)
- [Comprehensive Plan for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect of People with Disabilities](https://mn.gov/olmstead/assets/2018-01-22%20Comprehensive%20Plan%20for%20Prevention%20of%20Abuse%20and%20Neglect%20of%20People%20with%20Disabilities%20Report%20-%20Final%202-23-18%20tcm1143-468155.pdf)  
([https://mn.gov/olmstead/assets/2018-01-22 Comprehensive Plan for Prevention of Abuse and Neglect of People with Disabilities Report – Final 2-23-18 tcm1143-468155.pdf](https://mn.gov/olmstead/assets/2018-01-22%20Comprehensive%20Plan%20for%20Prevention%20of%20Abuse%20and%20Neglect%20of%20People%20with%20Disabilities%20Report%20-%20Final%202-23-18%20tcm1143-468155.pdf))
- [Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota](https://www.niwrc.org/sites/default/files/images/resource/Garden-of-Truth.pdf)  
(<https://www.niwrc.org/sites/default/files/images/resource/Garden-of-Truth.pdf>)
- [Homicide Reports: Relationship Abuse in Minnesota](https://www.vfmn.org/reports) (<https://www.vfmn.org/reports>)
- [Latinas and Intimate Partner Violence: Evidence-based Facts](https://esperanzaunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/3.11.73-Factsheet_GeneralIPV2021.pdf)  
([https://esperanzaunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/3.11.73-Factsheet\\_GeneralIPV2021.pdf](https://esperanzaunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/3.11.73-Factsheet_GeneralIPV2021.pdf))
- [Missing and Murdered African American Women Task Force: Final Report](https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/forms-documents/Documents/MMAAW%20full%20report%20final.pdf)  
(<https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/forms-documents/Documents/MMAAW%20full%20report%20final.pdf>)
- [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force: A Report to the Minnesota Legislature](https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/Documents/missing-murdered-indigenous-women-task-force-report.pdf) (<https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ojp/Documents/missing-murdered-indigenous-women-task-force-report.pdf>)
- [Shattered Hearts: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of American Indian Women and Girls in Minnesota](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ac26062506fbee9f6d08994/t/5b846304c2241b8b6232900f/1535402767253/Shattered-Hearts-Full.pdf)  
(<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ac26062506fbee9f6d08994/t/5b846304c2241b8b6232900f/1535402767253/Shattered-Hearts-Full.pdf>)
- [U.S. Transgender Survey: 2015 Minnesota State Report](https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTSMNStateReport(1017).pdf)  
([https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTSMNStateReport\(1017\).pdf](https://transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTSMNStateReport(1017).pdf))

## Resources on intersectionality

- [The Combahee River Collective Statement](https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition%20Readings.pdf)  
([https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition Readings.pdf](https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition%20Readings.pdf))
- [Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw](https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf)  
(<https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf>)
- [Intersectionality video by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://youtu.be/LFx3zDQQ3Vw?si=3MVSuXwbPleGHd3M)  
(<https://youtu.be/LFx3zDQQ3Vw?si=3MVSuXwbPleGHd3M>)

## INTERSECTIONALITY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Minnesota Department of Health  
Violence Prevention Programs Unit  
625 Robert St. N.  
PO Box 64975  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975  
651-201-5000  
[health.violenceprev@state.mn.us](mailto:health.violenceprev@state.mn.us)  
[www.health.state.mn.us/communities/svp/index.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/svp/index.html)

05/14/2024

*To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5400.*

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<sup>i</sup> Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics. In K. T. Bartlett & R. Kennedy (Eds.), *Feminist legal theory: Readings in law and gender*. (pp. 57–80). Routledge.

<sup>ii</sup> National Association of Independent Schools. (2018, June 22). Kimberlé Crenshaw: What is intersectionality? [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViDtnfQ9FHc>

<sup>iii</sup> Cole, C., Raguette, M., Rider, G. N., & McMorris, B.J. (2024). Predictors of adolescent intimate partner sexual violence victimization: patterns of intersectional social positions in a statewide, school-based sample. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 2024 Jan 16:8862605231221504. doi: 10.1177/08862605231221504. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 38229477.