

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+)

**A Report on GBA Plus in British
Columbia and Canada**

December 2022



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Acknowledgements

The REACH-Cities (Research and Action for Healthy Cities) project is part of the Cities, Health, and Active Transportation Research Lab at Simon Fraser University. REACH-Cities is a 6-year research program supported through Dr. Meghan Winters' Canadian Institute of Health Research Applied Public Health Chair, Sex and Gender in Healthy Cities. The REACH-Cities program is responsive to the needs of partners, to address urgent questions and timely opportunities. The work aims to identify and implement practical ways to incrementally embed gender and social equity considerations into city planning processes and advance the work of healthy and equitable cities.

The REACH-Cities team works and lives on the stolen ancestral territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh), Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem (kʷikwəłəm), Kwantlen, Qayqayt, and Tsawwassen First Nations in what are colonially known as Vancouver, Burnaby, and Surrey. We are grateful for access to these lands and are committed to centering equity and reconciliation for Indigenous peoples in our work.

This report is compiled and written by Lucy Wicken, with support from Dr. Meghan Winters, Dr. Julia Smith, and Tessa Williams (RPP, MCIP).

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How to use this resource

The following report is designed to be used as a resource for government, academic, and community organization work regarding gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) and equity. The report summarizes information from Government of Canada web pages, academic articles, and Indigenous community organization reports while also briefly synthesizing the literature. It follows gender-based analysis plus from its inception to current-day use, discussing its evolution, limitations, and areas for improvement moving forward.

A non-exhaustive list of ways to use this resource:

- Take the Gender-Based Analysis Plus Course & gain a certificate in GBA+ training
- Use what you've learned in the course & share your learnings with co-workers by hosting a training session or presentation in your workplace
- Read the referenced literature for yourself to gain a deeper understanding of GBA+
- Open up the conversation! Read the report and talk about GBA+ with your friends and family

Some definitions:

- GBA+: an acronym for Gender-based Analysis Plus
- Equity seeking groups: groups who have and continue to experience structural barriers to opportunities, access, and resources due to discrimination based on race, culture, ability, or more [D1]
- Gender mainstreaming (introduced on page 16): a gendered perspective of systems and structures in policymaking [10]

Read ahead to learn about the operationalization of GBA+ in Canada and British Columbia!

Section 1 - What is GBA Plus?

Gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) is an analytical tool used by governments to identify how policies, legislations, initiatives, and programs will possibly impact people of marginalized genders and varying social identities. [1]

Status of Women Canada (now named Women and Gender Equality Canada) developed GBA+ to ensure that people, no matter their identity or experience, are considered in government decision-making. [1]

Table 1
Summary of Status of Women Canada's GBA+ Framework

GBA+ step	Explanation
Identify issue	Identify the context for the initiative and policy issue, as well as the related gender and diversity issues
Challenge assumptions	Ask what assumptions have been made, if there is a perceived neutrality of policies, if gender/diversity implications might be obscured by assumptions of uniformity
Gather the facts: Research and consult	Get a better picture of the issue through research and consultation: obtain disaggregated data, identify data gaps, seek out multiple viewpoints in consultation
Develop options and make recommendations	Use research to inform advice, indicate how options respond to gender/diversity issues; suggest how to adapt proposal to address differential impacts, barriers
Monitor and evaluate	Ensure evaluation framework highlights data gaps, identify unintended outcomes/negative impacts on diverse groups, enable adjustments to address issues

Note. Status of Women Canada (2017)

Figure [1]

History of GBA Plus in Canada

- **1995 Cabinet Commitment to GBA:** The 1995 Federal Plan for Gender Equality launches and the Government of Canada commits to utilizing GBA on all forthcoming policies, legislations, and programs. [2]
- **2009 Audit of GBA by Office of the Auditor General of Canada:** After reviewing GBA utilization in nine federal departments, the audit finds that GBA has been underutilized and unevenly implemented across departments. [2]

- **2009 Departmental Plan on Gender-Based Analysis:** Status of Women Canada, Privy Council Office, and the Treasury Board Secretariat create and table an action plan for implementing GBA Plus across federal government departments and agencies. The plan describes the roles of departments and agencies in supporting the implementation of GBA Plus. [2]
- **2015 Audit of GBA Plus by Office of the Auditor General of Canada:** The Auditor General releases a report called 'Implementing Gender-Based Analysis' wherein it recommends that Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), the Privy Council Office (PCO), and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) assess the barriers that departments and agencies had in implementing GBA Plus. [2]
- **2016-2020:** WAGE, PCO, and TBS release a GBA Plus Action to support departments and agencies in implementing GBA Plus, build its capacity, surveil and keep departments and agencies accountable, and subsequently report on the outcomes. The plan can be found here. [3]

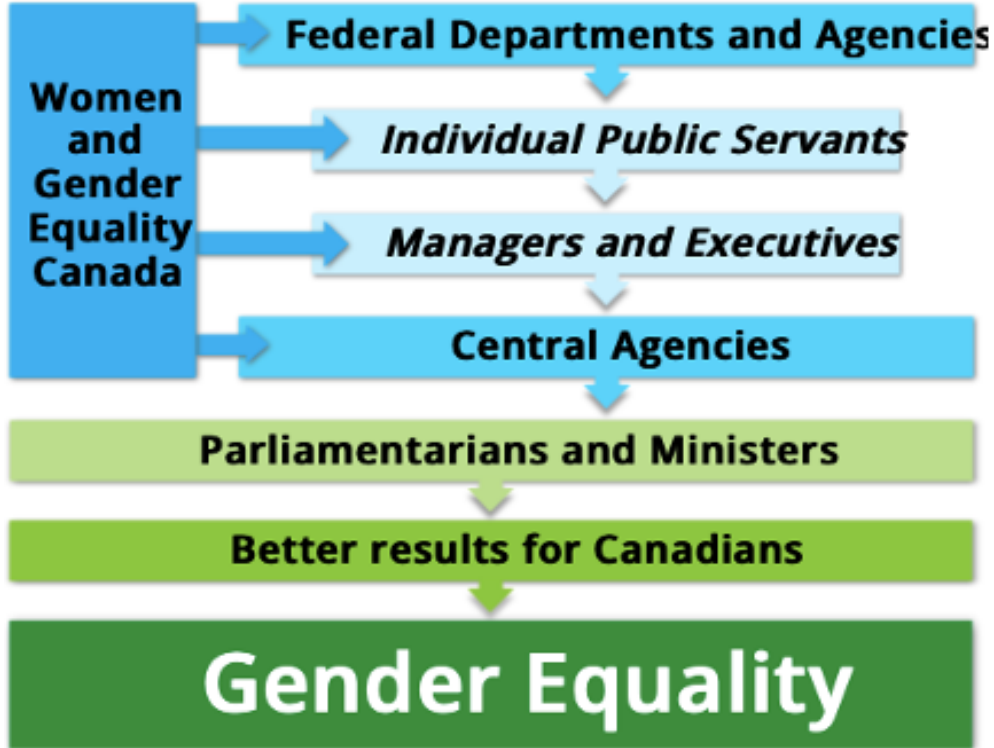


Figure [2]: A chart describing the transfer of knowledge about gender equality between departments and agencies.

Example of implementation of GBA+: Department of Justice Canada

Responsibilities and Accountability

As established by this Policy, Justice officials of all levels are responsible for applying GBA Plus in their work.

- **The Deputy Minister** is responsible for providing overall leadership to support GBA Plus in the department and ensuring due diligence related to GBA Plus across all business lines.
- **The Senior Assistant Deputy Minister (SADM), Policy Sector**, is responsible for the GBA Plus Unit, provides leadership in the promotion, implementation and monitoring of GBA Plus in the department, and advises senior management of their roles and responsibilities.
- **The Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs) and Assistant Deputy Attorney General (ADAG)** across the department are responsible for ensuring their officials take GBA Plus training and integrate GBA Plus in their work.
- The **GBA Plus Champion** is responsible for taking a leadership role in raising awareness about GBA Plus, promoting its' application and supporting innovative ways to strengthen intersectional analysis throughout the Department.
- **The GBA Plus Unit** is the first point of contact for GBA Plus at Justice. The Unit is responsible for: raising awareness and offering tools, information sessions and resources to help Justice officials better understand GBA Plus and how to integrate it into their work; providing advice and guidance on incorporating GBA Plus into specific initiatives undertaken by Justice colleagues; and, coordinating horizontal departmental reports.
- **All officials of Justice** are responsible for taking GBA Plus training and integrating GBA Plus as needed in their work.

Figure [4]

Gender-Based Analysis Plus Course & Certificate

Women and Gender Equality Canada offers a course and certificate on gender-based analysis plus (GBA Plus) for federal government public servants, employees of for profit and not for profit organizations, academics, and the public. The course offers an introduction to the analytical tool by educating on the distinction between sex and gender, defining GBA+, providing examples of GBA+ in action, and offering scenarios to test one's understanding of the framework. The course offers a certificate of completion for those who pass 80% of the questions. [Find the course here.](#) [2]

Takeaways from *What is GBA Plus?*

This section outlines what gender-based analysis is, who is responsible for executing it, how it is operationalized within the federal government, and how to learn more.

- Developed by Status of Women Canada (now Women and Gender Equality Canada), gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) is an analytical tool used by governments to identify how policies, legislations, initiatives, and programs will possibly impact people of marginalized genders and varying social identities
- The federal government has been committed to GBA+ use for 27 years, launching the Federal Plan for Gender Equality in 1995
- Example of GBA+ implementation and delegation: The Department of Justice Canada delegates GBA+ roles to employees. Roles range between the Deputy Minister (responsible for keeping the department accountable to GBA+ integration) to the officials of Justice who are required to take GBA+ training and integrate GBA+ in their work
- A course on GBA+ and accompanying certificate are available for public consumption on the Women and Gender Equality Canada website

This section:

- presents the history of GBA+ in Canada. In order to use, understand, research, or critique a framework, it is necessary to understand its history
- provides a foundational understanding of GBA+, offering a course to learn about GBA+ and its application in Canada for government employees, non-profit employees, and the public

Section 2 - Evolving GBA Plus

Although GBA+ is the most dominant gender-based analysis framework, others have been created to centre the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples from First Nation, Métis, and Inuit groups. These include culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA) and Métis-specific gender-based analysis.

Culturally Relevant Gender-Based Analysis (CRGBA)

Culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA) is a framework that was created by the Native Women's Association of Canada in response to the failure of mainstream gender-based analysis to acknowledge the experiences, cultures, challenges, and barriers of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender diverse people in Canada. The CRGBA framework acknowledges the current and historical realities of these groups, including intergenerational trauma and other impacts of colonization. This framework works to minimize, instead of perpetuate, harm for all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Often, GBA+ treats Indigenous peoples as a homogenous group, but CRGBA acknowledges the vast and varied experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people. As culture is ever-evolving, the Native Women's Association of Canada acknowledges that this framework is fluid. [5] CRBA acknowledges:

- Distinct experiences between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people
- Distinct experiences between people of different gender identities and sexual orientations
- The importance of intersectionality in understanding peoples' complex experiences
- The importance of Indigenous knowledges (ways of knowing and teaching, ceremonies, spirituality, language, storytelling, observation, and more) and Indigenous women's knowledges (distinct experiences with colonization & historical roles as land and environment protectors) [5]

How can the CGRBA framework be used?

The tool is designed to help government departments and organizations respond to the diverse needs of Indigenous peoples & stay accountable throughout the process.

[Read the report here.](#) [5]

Métis-Specific Gender Based Analysis (GBA+)

A Métis-specific gender-based analysis framework acknowledges and includes cultural, political, historical, and contemporary experiences of different Métis groups in Canada. It also acknowledges that communities must be involved in engagement processes, including Elders and youth. Like the CRGBA, it understands that culture is continuously evolving, meaning the framework must evolve and be flexible, too. This framework must utilize a Métis worldview, meaning Métis women's roles, gender and culture as interlinked, and equity are acknowledged. It is trauma-informed, and focused on strengths, as well as distinctions between Métis populations and other Indigenous groups. [6]

How can data be collected to inform this framework?

Limited disaggregated data on Métis populations exists.

- Build partnerships within Métis communities and between Métis structures and provincial and federal governments
- Gathering reports/papers written by Métis
- Gathering disaggregated data
- Gathering traditional sources, such as oral stories, songs, ceremonies, etc [6]

How can this framework be used?

The tool can be used between Métis organizations, people, and government structures, as well as between these Métis structures and provincial and federal government structures. [Read the report here.](#) [6]

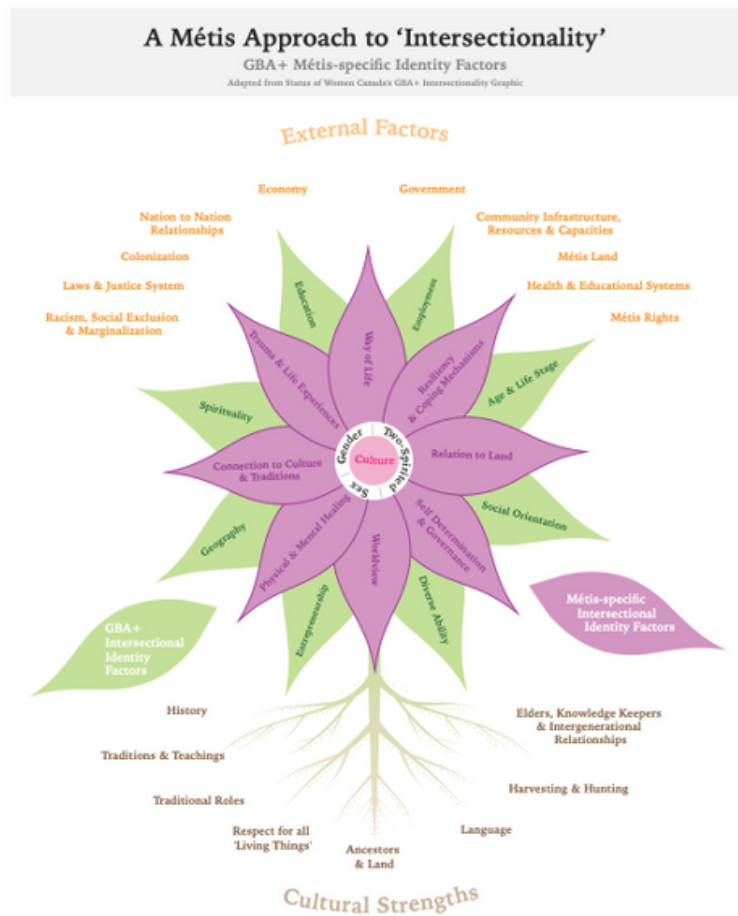


Figure [6]

Takeaways from *Evolving GBA Plus*

This section outlines the definitions and potential ways of applying culturally relevant gender-based analysis and Métis-specific gender-based analysis frameworks in academic, organizational, and government work.

- Culturally relevant gender-based analysis (CRGBA) is a framework that was created by the Native Women’s Association of Canada to incorporate the lived experiences of First Nations Métis, and Inuit women, Two-Spirit, and gender diverse people in Canada
- Métis-specific gender-based analysis is a framework that incorporates the varied lived experiences of Métis groups across Canada
- Both are trauma-informed approaches, considering the violent histories of colonialism and white supremacy that have, and continue to, directly impact Indigenous peoples
- Both frameworks were designed to assist organizations and governments in understanding the distinctions between Indigenous groups and their experiences, as well as appropriately collect data and build relationships with various Indigenous communities

This section:

- exhibits how the foundations of GBA+ have been used to create alternative frameworks that are more equitable for Indigenous populations
- introduces Culturally relevant gender-based analysis and Métis-specific gender-based analyses which offer Indigenous, trauma informed perspectives in place of mainstream GBA+
- provides information on how policy makers, academics, and community organizations can build and sustain relationships with various Indigenous groups in equitable ways

Section 3 - GBA Plus in British Columbia

Why GBA+ matters in government in British Columbia

What we've learned through the application of GBA+ in BC

- Women comprise 62% of the minimum wage workforce
- Indigenous and other women of colour earn 23% less than white women
- Women are 7x more likely to report sexual assault than men
- BC has the 3rd largest gender pay gap in Canada, at 22.6%
- Women are severely underrepresented in government, including those who are Indigenous, Black, newcomer, LGBTQ2S+, low-income, and disabled women [7]

In 2018, the Government of British Columbia committed to using a gendered lens and working to advance gender equity in all budgets, policies, and programs. Intersectional gender analysis allows municipalities to better serve their residents, all of whom have a wide variety of lived experiences and histories. Beyond the provincial government, gender-based analysis is important in municipal policies because it can allow municipal policy makers and employees to identify ways to understand who uses what services, how often, for what reasons, and how they can be better improved to help various populations. For example, women's safety in public spaces can be improved by ensuring adequate lighting is available at transit stations. Intersectional gender analysis allows municipalities to better serve their residents, all of whom have a wide variety of lived experiences and histories. Municipal governments can apply GBA+ by ensuring that decision makers come from diverse cultural, racial, class, gender, and ability backgrounds, staff are trained on how to use GBA+, and data is collected and utilized and progress is tracked to inform policies. [7]

GBA+ has helped guide the provincial government to consider the following: assumptions being made about audience/clientele, stereotypes, norms, or social factors informing one's bias, who is being consulted and who is not, whose voices are being ignored or silenced, analyzing data by the intersection of identity, and use of equity measures and their intersectional components. [7]

Example of GBA+ Application in BC: Climate Change

The 2021 *Climate Change, Intersectionality, and GBA+ in British Columbia* report analyzes how a GBA+ lens can be used to identify how people of various identities are affected by climate change differently as well as outlining ways in which policy makers and community partners can incorporate GBA+ into climate change planning. [8]

GBA+ utilized in policy, legislation, planning, and events must acknowledge the skills, assets, and strengths of systemically marginalized populations. People within these populations know best how to help their community and often already have relationships within their community. Municipalities must provide ample resources and support for these groups. Communities who are systemically marginalized contribute little to climate change yet are most affected by it. [8]

Housing

People who are housing-insecure or experiencing homelessness are most likely to be impacted by climate change events, including floods, wildfires, and other extreme weather events. In turn, climate change events affect the amount and quality of housing available to people. [8]

Health

Mental Health: Climate change events can cause mental health issues, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and other mental health challenges, such as anxiety and stress. Mothers experience more emotional labour during climate change events, as they are expected to deal with their own mental health and the mental health of family members. Alcohol and drug use increases during these events, as well. [8]

Physical Health: Wildfire smoke causes pregnant people to be more at risk, Indigenous peoples are more at risk of encountering wildfires due to being on the land more than other groups, and extreme heat disproportionately affects seniors, pregnant people, and single men (who have fewer social contacts than women). [8]

Gender-based Violence and Safety

Transition houses for women escaping domestic violence cannot accommodate climate change (ie: no AC, windows and doors must remain closed for safety reasons). Evacuation centers do not consider women and children's needs. Domestic violence cases increase dramatically during climate change events. [8]

Economic Livelihoods

Women are more likely to work casual and/or part-time jobs, especially women of colour and newcomer women. Homecare workers (predominantly women of colour and newcomer women) are expected to care for their patients and their own families. As we have seen with the COVID-10 pandemic, women are disproportionately more likely to take care of domestic duties, childrearing, and take time off work during climate change events. As well, rural and agricultural areas experience climate change more harshly than urban areas, affecting local economies in those areas. [8]

Food Security and Traditional Foods

Climate change greatly impacts Indigenous peoples' abilities to source food and medicines from the land, impacting ecosystems and biodiversity and disrupting food supply. This affects rural communities more harshly than urban communities, as food is limited and more expensive than before. [8]

Some steps that policy makers can consider include, but are not limited to:

- Improve preparedness by creating climate change adaptation strategies, investing in decolonization, investing in community capacity building initiatives, and fast-tracking housing and poverty reductions strategies
- Create a clear framework for all community partners to use that lays out equity principles & understands marginalization outside of economics (social, physical, historical, ecological, etc)
- Recruit women and gender diverse people from all social locations to be in leadership roles for climate change planning, support training in emergency management [8]

[Read the report here.](#) [8]

Takeaways from *GBA Plus in British Columbia*

This section outlines some statistics about equity seeking groups that the Government of British Columbia has collected through GBA+, when the province adopted a widespread GBA+ framework, why it's used, and how it assists the Government of British Columbia in understanding the lived experiences of various demographics. As well, this section covers a summary of the report *Climate Change, Intersectionality, and GBA+ in British Columbia* which analyzes how GBA+ can be used by policymakers to appropriately plan for climate change while considering how it affects people differently based on their intersectional identities.

Some important points include:

- GBA+ was adopted by the Government of British Columbia in 2018
- GBA+ allows the government to consider what demographics are being ignored by government services, what assumptions or stereotypes are being made about populations, and more
- Governments should provide strong resources for communities to take care of themselves during climate disasters
- Policy makers should have a strong understanding of how climate change intersects with housing, health, gender-based violence and safety, financial stability, and food security
- Policy makers should consider the proposals above (on page 13) to ensure that equity-seeking communities are prepared for climate change

This section:

- presents background information on how GBA+ has been applied in British Columbia, what statistics have been found, and how it can be applied in future
- offers tangible examples of ways in which GBA+ can be used to improve safety for women in public spaces, as well as in climate change planning for equity-seeking communities
- provides instructions for policy makers on ways to work with equity-seeking groups who are most affected by climate change

Section 4 - Limitations

Some scholars claim that the GBA+ framework negates the intersectionality framework coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Examples of such critiques are Christoffersen and Hankivsky. [9] A major point of critique is that GBA+ co-opts the intersectionality framework but prioritizes one dimension- gender-over others. This approach can be additive, when people are treated as either oppressed or privileged, not as both/and. This false binary contradicts Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality. Christoffersen and Hankivsky also argue that prioritization of gender in GBA+ erases important related systems of power, such as settler colonialism, capitalism, cisgenderism, and political borders, perpetuating the concept of 'single-issue' problems.⁹ The authors argue that government funding is not intersectional either, in that women's organizations are treated as homogenous. As a result, non-profit organizations that may focus on multiple social identities are forced to prioritize gender due to government rules around claiming funding. As well, gender is used to 'explain' inequities in communities, instead of the root issues. For example, gender-based violence for Indigenous women is often blamed on Indigenous men, instead of settler colonialism and white men, who are disproportionately perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women. [9]

Christoffersen and Hankivsky recommend that in order to operationalize an intersectional approach:

- Government must teach and operationalize the definition of intersectionality within departments and agencies, as people have contradicting understandings
- New tools must be adopted, such as an Indigenous Intersectional Gender-Based Analysis (IIGBA+) (Pictou 2020)
- Possibly replace GBA+ with an Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis (IBPA) (Cameron and Tedds 1) [9]

Limitations of Gender Mainstreaming



The concept of gender mainstreaming has its roots in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which emerged out of the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

[10, p. 248)



Gender-based analysis plus is a framework that has evolved from the foundations of gender mainstreaming, a gendered perspective of systems and structures in policymaking. [11] Like any framework, limitations exist within gender mainstreaming.

Stephanie Paterson states that an 'expert' is delegated to "analyse, monitor, and suggest interventions" [11, p. 395], and that the biases and power of this 'expert' are unchecked, as an 'expert-bureaucratic' model is used as opposed to a model of community engagement. This process has been criticized for privileging gender in what should be an intersectional assessment based on people's various social locations, as well as failing to create strong bonds between government and women's organizations. When an 'expert' sets the stage for policy that affects women and other marginalized groups, experiential knowledge is often ignored & the 'expert's' lived experience is privileged in comparison to that of others. [11]

Gender-based analysis plus does not always truly incorporate an intersectional framework. A framework needs to be established so there is consistency in the GBA+ approach between departments/institutions. [12] For example, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and the Department of National Defence (DND) use integrationist instead of transformative approaches to gender mainstreaming. What this means is women are integrated into a military culture that is deeply masculine, while no critique of gendered experiences is made by the institution. [10]

Professor Julia Smith, from the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University, says "My general critique of GBA+ is that, at the federal level at least, it becomes a box ticking exercise. Civil servants go through the motions of training and assessments, but it's not clear if they apply the knowledge/findings. That said, I know many colleagues in other countries that are envious that Canada at least has a formal commitment to addressing gender inequities." (J. Smith, personal communication, September 9, 2022).

Takeaways of *Limitations*

This section breaks down the article *Responding to inequities in public policy: Is GBA+ the right way to operationalize intersectionality?* by Ashlee Christoffersen and Olena Hankivsky, as well as limitations of gender mainstreaming.

Some important points include:

- GBA+ prioritizes gender, and minimizes other systems of power like colonialism and capitalism
- GBA+ funding is not intersectional, meaning government funding is often given to organizations based on one dimension of peoples' identities
- GBA+ often ignores the foundations of inequities
- Mandatory training on intersectionality should be implemented for government employees
- GBA+ should be replaced with Indigenous and intersectional analysis frameworks
- Gender mainstreaming describes a gendered perspective of systems and structures in policymaking in which a bureaucratic 'expert' is delegated, neglecting the voices of those with experiential knowledge
- Although Canadian governmental structures do utilize GBA+ and gender mainstreaming to some extent, work can be done to make it more equitable & to step away from it as a 'box ticking exercise'

This section:

- provides critiques of mainstream GBA+ as a framework that does not fully encapsulate intersectionality
- offers the alternative perspective that GBA+ prioritizes gender over other social identities
- depicts how governments can operationalize a framework that is truly intersectional

Section 5 - Moving Forward

The 2022 Auditor General's Report: Follow-up on Gender-Based Analysis Plus states that the Privy Council Office, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, and Women and Gender Equality Canada must improve the implementation, monitoring, and reporting processes for GBA Plus within federal government departments. The report states that some barriers in conducting GBA Plus include: an absence of mandatory government requirements, tight deadlines for developing policy initiatives, limited senior management review within departments, and lack of capacity in departments and agencies. [13]

7 recommendations on how GBA Plus implementation, monitoring, and reporting can be improved are offered in the report. Below is an example of a recommendation:

“ 3.88: Women and Gender Equality Canada, in collaboration with other responsible departments and agencies and central agencies, should develop specific and measurable targets for the results frameworks that it leads and to which it contributes and develop and implement a plan and monitor results to improve the availability of data for the intersectional identity factors relevant to all indicators used in related frameworks. ”

[13, p. 25]

[Read the report here.](#) [13]

Ultimately, GBA+ is a useful foundational framework to use in working towards social equity on the systemic level. In theory, it provides an intersectional approach for policy makers, academics, and community organizations to understand how policy affects people differently. Moving forward, researchers and community organizations argue that an analytical framework that incorporates identities outside of gender, as well as the lived experiences of people from equity-seeking groups, should be developed. While GBA+ is not perfect, evidence shows that it is a step in the right direction toward a more equitable society, from a municipal level, to provincial, to federal.

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