

# Journal of Rural and Community Development

## Abandoned Routes: Unravelling the Impact of Greyhound Bus Cancellations on Gender-Based Violence Survivors in Rural And Remote Canada

**Authors:** Janina Winnicki, Madeleine Sheppard-Perkins, & Francine E. Darroch

**Citation:**

Winnicki, J., Sheppard-Perkins, M., Darroch, F. E. (2024). Abandoned routes: Unravelling the impact of Greyhound Bus cancellations on gender-based violence survivors in rural and remote Canada. *The Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 19(4), 107–125.

**Publisher:**

Rural Development Institute, Brandon University.

**Editor:**

Dr. Doug Ramsey

**Open Access Policy:**

This journal provides open access to all of its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. Such access is associated with increased readership and increased citation of an author's work.



**BRANDON  
UNIVERSITY**  
Founded 1899



# Abandoned Routes: Unravelling the Impact of Greyhound Bus Cancellations on Gender-Based Violence Survivors in Rural and Remote Canada

**Janina Winnicki**

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

[janinawinnicki@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:janinawinnicki@cmail.carleton.ca)

**Madeleine Sheppard-Perkins**

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

[maddysheppardperkins@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:maddysheppardperkins@cmail.carleton.ca)

**Francine E. Darroch**

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

[francinedarroch@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:francinedarroch@cunet.carleton.ca)

## Abstract

The purpose of this media analysis was to develop a nuanced understanding of how the cancellation of Greyhound Bus Lines was reported and the potential impacts of risk and perpetuation of gender-based violence (GBV) in rural and remote communities in Canada.

This mixed-methods media analysis, using a transportation justice framework, employed the following process: (1) a comprehensive search of 7 news databases and media websites, (2) title-abstract screening, and (3) full-text screening. We conducted a frequency analysis of article source type, locality, key issues, and time trend analysis. Finally, we engaged in thematic analysis of article content to discern key thematic areas.

Over half of the articles were published by National-level news sources ( $n = 26$ , 51.0%). Publication dates aligned with major route cancellation announcements in mid-2018 ( $n = 28$ , 54.9%). Using thematic analysis, three themes were generated: (1) transportation inequities serve as significant barriers for GBV survivors, limiting access to safe spaces and fostering the need for unsafe travel practices; (2) the discontinuation of Greyhound services disproportionately impacts Indigenous communities, exacerbating pre-existing structures of GBV risk; and (3) advocates emphasize the need for collaborative efforts between all levels of government to establish an integrated national transportation system as a solution.

According to media reports, the cancellation of Greyhound Bus routes exacerbates barriers to accessing services and perpetuates risk factors for those experiencing GBV. These findings highlight the importance of federally supported, community-based approaches to develop and share sustainable rural and remote transportation solutions from the grassroots level.

**Keywords:** Greyhound bus, gender-based violence, missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, rural transit, transportation justice

# **Itinéraires abandonnés : comprendre l'impact des annulations d'autobus Greyhound sur les survivant-e-s de la violence fondée sur le sexe dans les régions rurales et éloignées du Canada**

**Janina Winnicki**

Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
[janinawinnicki@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:janinawinnicki@cmail.carleton.ca)

**Madeleine Sheppard-Perkins**

Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
[maddysheppardperkins@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:maddysheppardperkins@cmail.carleton.ca)

**Francine E. Darroch**

Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
[francinedarroch@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:francinedarroch@cunet.carleton.ca)

## **Résumé**

Le but de cette analyse médiatique était de développer une compréhension nuancée de la manière dont l'annulation des lignes d'autobus Greyhound a été rapportée et des impacts potentiels du risque et de la perpétuation de la violence fondée sur le genre (VBG) dans les communautés rurales et éloignées du Canada.

Cette analyse médiatique à méthodes mixtes, utilisant un cadre de justice dans les transports, a utilisé le processus suivant : (1) une recherche complète de 7 bases de données d'actualités et sites Web de médias, (2) une sélection du titre-résumé et (3) une sélection du texte intégral. Nous avons effectué une analyse de fréquence du type de source d'article, de la localité, des problèmes clés et une analyse des tendances temporelles. Enfin, nous avons procédé à une analyse thématique du contenu des articles afin de discerner les domaines thématiques clés.

Plus de la moitié des articles ont été publiés par des sources d'information au niveau national (n = 26, 51,0 %). Les dates de publication s'alignaient sur les annonces d'annulation des principaux itinéraires à la mi-2018 (n = 28, 54,9 %). À l'aide d'une analyse thématique, trois thèmes ont été générés : (1) les inégalités en matière de transport constituent des obstacles importants pour les survivants de VBG, limitant l'accès à des espaces sûrs et encourageant les pratiques dangereuses de déplacement; (2) l'arrêt des services Greyhound a un impact disproportionné sur les communautés autochtones, exacerbant les structures préexistantes de risque de VBG ; et (3) les défenseurs soulignent la nécessité d'efforts de collaboration entre tous les niveaux de gouvernement pour établir un système de transport national intégré comme solution.

Selon les médias, l'annulation des lignes de Greyhound Bus exacerbe les obstacles à l'accès aux services et perpétue les facteurs de risque pour les personnes victimes de VBG. Ces résultats soulignent l'importance des approches communautaires soutenues par le gouvernement fédéral pour développer et partager des solutions de transport durables en milieu rural et éloigné à l'échelle locale.

**Mots-clés :** bus Greyhound, violence fondée sur le genre, femmes et filles autochtones disparues et assassinées, transport en milieu rural, justice dans les transports

## **1.0 Introduction**

Gender-based violence (GBV), particularly intimate partner violence (IPV), is pervasive in Canada and disproportionately affects women living in rural, remote, and Northern (RRN) areas, as well as Indigenous women. Until its cancellation, Greyhound Bus Lines served as a critical mode of public transportation for individuals in RRN communities, in many cases enabling individuals to escape IPV and access GBV services. Thus, this media analysis aims to understand the reporting of the Greyhound Bus Lines cancellation and potential role in increasing risks associated with GBV in RRN Canada.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Gender-Based Violence in Rural, Remote, and Northern Areas***

Gender-based violence, encompassing acts of physical, psychological, sexual, and financial harm-causing behaviours towards individuals due to their gender identity or expression, is a pervasive public health issue (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024). In Canada, the statistics on GBV reflect the devastating nature of this issue, with one-third of women over 15 having experienced sexual violence and 44% having experienced IPV (Statistics Canada, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2021). Though individuals of all genders may experience IPV, women are especially at risk, with 79% of police-reported IPV survivors identifying as women in Canada (Conroy et al., 2019). The physical health consequences of IPV include fatal and non-fatal injuries, sexually transmitted infections, and non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, cancer, and cardiovascular disease; psychological consequences include anxiety disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder, substance use, depression, and suicide (World Health Organization, 2013). IPV may also impact pregnancy, with an increased risk of fetal and maternal mortality, uterine rupture, premature birth, and low infant birth weight (El Kady et al., 2005). From a cost perspective, the economic impact of spousal violence cost Canadians an estimated \$7.4 billion in 2009, with mental health issues and healthcare costs comprising over \$200 million (Zhang et al., 2012). Beyond physical, mental, and economic considerations, geographical location can impact the risk of GBV.

The risk of IPV is heightened for individuals living in rural areas. While not universally defined, the Canadian Census describes rurality as “small towns, villages, and other populated places with less than 1000 population” (Statistics Canada, 2022, para. 5); for this work, we considered rurality in the context of transportation equity and accessibility, focusing on areas with limited public transit options, longer travel distances to essential services, and a higher reliance on personal vehicles. When further refining demographics into rural versus urban geographical settings, rural women experienced IPV at rates 75% higher than urban women and 400% higher than rural men (Conroy et al., 2019). According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), systemic and structural factors contributing to higher IPV in RRN spaces specifically include inadequate housing, poverty, and gender and racial biases (Moffit et al., 2022). The authors of the commissions further stress the enduring legacies of colonization, such as intergenerational trauma, social inequities, and cultural/geographic isolation that contribute to increased IPV. Discussing Indigenous women’s experiences with GBV is imperative given the findings from the 2019 report by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), which states

that “persistent and deliberate human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses are the root cause behind Canada’s staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people” (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019, para. 1). According to statistics published in 2021, 61% of Indigenous women reported at least one experience of IPV within their lifetime, compared to 44% of non-Indigenous women (Heidinger, 2021). Over half of Canada’s Indigenous population lives in RRN regions, which may be a contributing factor to the IPV discrepancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2020). It is important to note that geographic factors alone, such as isolation, do not contribute to the structural factors impacting the heightened risk of IPV in Indigenous communities; rather, the victimization of Indigenous peoples in Canada stems from many compounding factors related to historic and ongoing systems of colonialism and patriarchy (Conroy, 2024).

## ***2.2 Accessing a Safe Space: Challenges of Relocation in Rural, Remote, and Northern Areas***

Survivors of GBV, especially IPV, often need to access a safe space in order to escape violent circumstances; indeed, central to this issue is the consideration of affordable and accessible transportation. The spatial accessibility of shelters and other GBV supports can act as a major barrier for survivors of GBV who live in communities that are fly-in, without year-round road access, and/or without intercity bus services (Moffitt et al., 2022). Only 45% of shelters and transition houses in small and rural communities have public transit access, as opposed to 93% in urban and suburban areas (Maki, 2018), making transportation that is safe, affordable, and accessible a priority barrier for GBV survivors in Canada’s RRN communities (Dale et al., 2021).

As a result of limited transportation options, individuals living in RRN areas may resort to unsafe transportation methods, such as hitchhiking or ride-sharing apps, to access services, healthcare, or flee IPV (Dale et al., 2021; Moffitt et al., 2022). The MMIWG report highlighted how the absence of safe and affordable transportation systems contributes to the violence against and murder of Indigenous women, with the most significant example being the Highway of Tears (Dale et al., 2021). Officially designated as Highway 16, this notorious route forms part of the Trans-Canada Highway network that traverses Western Canada and covers over 725 kilometres (450 miles) from the northern Pacific Coast of Prince Rupert to the inland city of Prince George and beyond (Morin, 2021). Many of the women and girls who disappeared along this highway had been hitchhiking to access services outside of their RRN communities (Dale et al., 2021). The presence of accessible and safe transportation systems should be considered a critical protective and support mechanism for promoting the safety of those living in RRN areas, especially Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

## ***2.3 Cancellation of Long-Haul Bus Routes: Risky Means of Travel Perpetuates GBV***

Recent cancellations of long-haul bus routes, notably Greyhound Bus, left significant service gaps in RRN communities, which ceased routes in Western Canada in 2018 and finally withdrew all of its Canadian intercity routes in 2021 (Evans, 2021; Lambert & Graveland, 2018). In a similar timeframe, the

Saskatchewan Transportation Company, which previously serviced Indigenous communities in Northern Saskatchewan, was cancelled (Umereweneza et al., 2020). Since its removal, these communities have reinstated the “pass” system—meaning that if Treaty individuals without their own transportation need assistance, they must apply to the Band Council. This involves disclosing their reason for the request, making it difficult for survivors to maintain anonymity from the community and avoid potential retaliation from the perpetrator, which can be an impossible obstacle to overcome (Umereweneza et al., 2020).

GBV may increase as both a direct and indirect result of these cancellations. GBV survivors may opt to stay in their abusive situations, with the disappearance of reliable, affordable, and accessible transportation in RRN areas playing a role in this decision. Alternatively, if GBV survivors leave, they may be forced to use unsafe alternative transportation methods, such as hitchhiking, which would likely also increase GBV, as seen in the Highway of Tears (Dale et al., 2021). Clearly, transportation is a major issue for GBV survivors. There is a dearth of academic literature that explores the impact of Greyhound Bus cancellation.

Our review of the academic literature reveals a major gap in empirical understandings of how these significant transportation cancellations have impacted communities in RRN Canada. However, particularly after major route cancellations in Western Canada in 2018, there was significant media attention paired with calls to action from GBV advocates. As such, this review turned to a media analysis to better understand the key themes, recommendations, and perceived solutions concerning transportation cancellations in RRN Canada and GBV.

### **3.0 Theoretical Framework—Transportation Justice**

The transportation justice framework, rooted in the origins of the environmental justice movement and urban planning, centralizes social equity in transportation; an ideal state in which no person or group is disadvantaged by the lack of access to transportation and subsequent inability to access opportunities or services (Beiler & Mohammed, 2016; Karner et al., 2020). Scholarship using transportation justice focuses on broadening understandings of transportation as an upstream structural determinant of health, recognizing how oppressive, colonial policy decisions impact the unjust and inequitable distribution of resources and services (Karner et al., 2020). Transportation equity necessarily underscores conversations about GBV in RRN spaces due to inherent transportation inequities in these areas, which affect access to GBV services. The transportation justice framework is crucial in understanding how transportation access is not merely a logistical issue but is deeply intertwined with social equity and systemic oppression. It recognizes that various intersecting identities, such as race, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status, significantly shape individuals’ experiences and access to safe transportation. Research by Lucas et al. (2016) and Bullard (2003) illustrates how these intersecting identities influence transportation equity, making it imperative to adopt an intersectional lens in developing policies that address transportation needs for marginalized communities. Transportation justice underscores the need for equitable access to transit as a protective factor for individuals experiencing various forms of victimization, including IPV, child abuse, and human trafficking, as these forms of violence often share overlapping needs for secure relocation and anonymity. Through reflexive practice, the development of the research question, methods, and thematic analysis was guided by a transportation justice lens. Further, by conducting

a media analysis, the impetus of this project was based on action: to help highlight community advocate’s voices through local and national media reports and reinvigorate conversations about sustainable solutions to improve transportation access for individuals affected by GBV.

## 4.0 Methods

### 4.1 Search Strategy

This media analysis involved a comprehensive search of news databases, media websites, and a supplementary scan of Google News. In consultation with an academic librarian, five news databases were included in the search: *Canadian Newsstream*, *Canadian Business and Current Affairs Database*, *Canadian Periodicals Index Quarterly*, and *Eureka*. To optimize the breadth and depth of the search, Boolean search strings were used where possible. See the Table for detailed information on search strategy by database.

Table 1. *Article Search Strategy by Database*

Database	Search terms	Limited by
Canadian Newsstream	(Bus* Transport* Greyhound) AND (Gender OR gender-based OR gender based OR Intimate OR Interpersonal OR domestic OR Woman OR Women) AND (Assault OR Aggression OR Maltreatment OR Traffick*) AND (Cancel* OR Reduc*) AND location (Canada)	Source type: blogs, podcasts, websites, magazines, newspapers
Canadian Business and Current Affairs Database	("Bus" OR Greyhound) AND (Gender OR gender-based OR Intimate OR Interpersonal OR domestic OR wom*n) AND location(canada) AND (Cancel* OR Reduc*) AND (Violence OR Abuse OR Batter* OR Assault OR Aggression OR Maltreatment OR Traffick*)	Source type: blogs, podcasts, websites, magazines, newspapers
Canadian Periodicals Index Quarterly	Bus* Transport* GreyhoundANDBasic Search: Gender OR gender-based OR gender based OR Intimate OR Interpersonal OR domestic OR Woman OR WomenANDKeyword: Violence OR Abuse OR Assault OR Aggression OR Maltreatment OR Traffick*	Source type: blogs, podcasts, websites, magazines, newspapers
Eureka	greyhound bus AND violence	Source type: press, television & radio

Relevant media websites were also screened, including The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the CTV Television Network. Each was searched with the terms “Greyhound” and “Saskatchewan transportation company” individually because the search engines did not allow for Boolean searches. The Google search was limited to Canada and used the following search string: “site:.ca greyhound reduc\*”. For all media sources, results published before 2012 were not considered; specifically, these time limitations consider the two years before Greyhound started reducing lines to account for any media attention prior to official reductions.

## **4.2 Media Selection**

Two evaluators were responsible for screening the articles at two levels of screening: title-abstract and full-text. The authors deliberated on all conflicts until reaching a consensus. At the title-abstract level, all media related to a major bus system cancellation and the impact on groups experiencing marginalization were included. Possibly relevant search results were compiled, and duplicates were removed. At the full-text level, only articles mentioning GBV and/or IPV in the context of bus cancellations were included for analysis. As such, articles were considered eligible if they (1) were a news media source, and (2) discussed Canadian bus route cancellations in relation to GBV. Exclusion criteria included (1) social media posts or video news sources without transcripts, (2) non-English articles, and (3) articles related to GBV *on* transportation.

## **4.3 Data Extraction and Analysis**

To conduct quantitative analysis, an excel spreadsheet was developed to reflect key objectives of this media review. Quantitative extraction included: source type (print newspaper, broadcast transcript, or online press), source locality (municipal, provincial, or national), publication year (2012–2023), and key issues (MMIWG, risky travel, and/or fleeing violence). Articles were tabulated for each category.

We then engaged in Braun and Clarke’s six-step thematic analysis process (2006) using NVivo 14 qualitative software to organize our data. We engaged in the following: first, the authors co-developed an open coding scheme with a small sample of article texts; second, the first author completed a full first round of coding; third, we reviewed and adjusted data in the codes to generate preliminary themes; fourth, all authors met to review and refine the themes; fifth, we further defined and differentiated the themes determining illustrative quote to represent our findings; finally, the sixth step was writing the results presented in this paper.

## **5.0 Results**

### **5.1 Search**

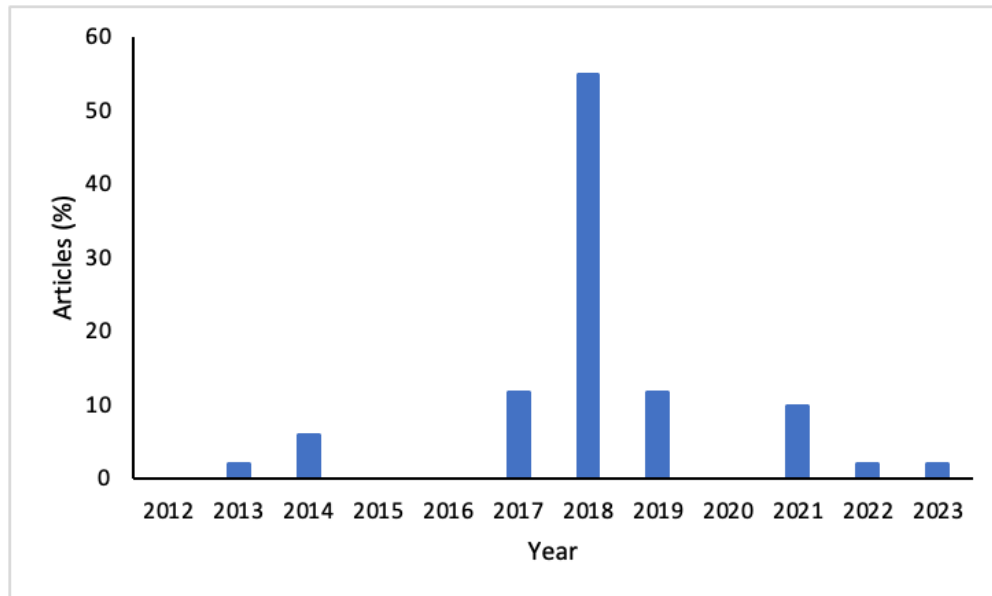
Our initial search yielded 2950 articles. Following Title-Abstract screening and duplicate removal, 79 articles moved to full-text screening. The reasons for exclusion were: no mention of GBV ( $n = 12$ ), no mention of bus cancellation ( $n = 11$ ), formatting issues ( $n = 2$ ), and previously undetected duplicates ( $n = 3$ ). Fifty-one articles were included in the final quantitative and qualitative thematic analysis.



### 5.2 Publication Year

When considering the year of publication, over half of the articles were published in 2018 ( $n = 28$ , 54.9%). Further, 2.0% ( $n = 1$ ) of articles were published in 2013, 5.9% ( $n = 3$ ) in 2014, 11.8% ( $n = 6$ ) in 2017, and 11.8% ( $n = 6$ ) in 2019, and 9.8% ( $n = 5$ ) in 2021. The last two (i.e., 2022 and 2023) accounted for a cumulative 2.0% ( $n = 2$ ) of published articles. Notably, no articles were published in 2012, 2015–2016, or 2020 (see Figure 1).

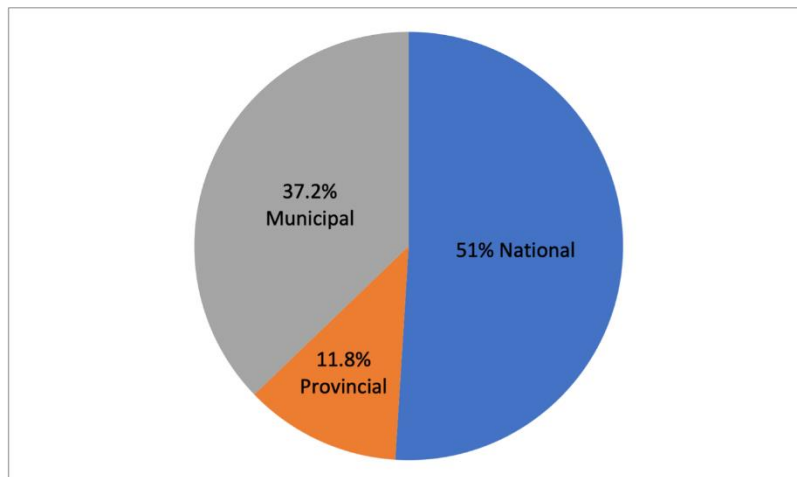
Figure 1: Percentage of articles by publication year.



### 5.3 Source Locality

The majority of articles were published by National-level news sources ( $n = 26$ , 51.0%). Municipal or local news sources published over a third of all articles ( $n = 19$ , 37.3%), while provincial-level sources accounted for only 11.8% ( $n = 6$ ) of published articles (see Figure 2).

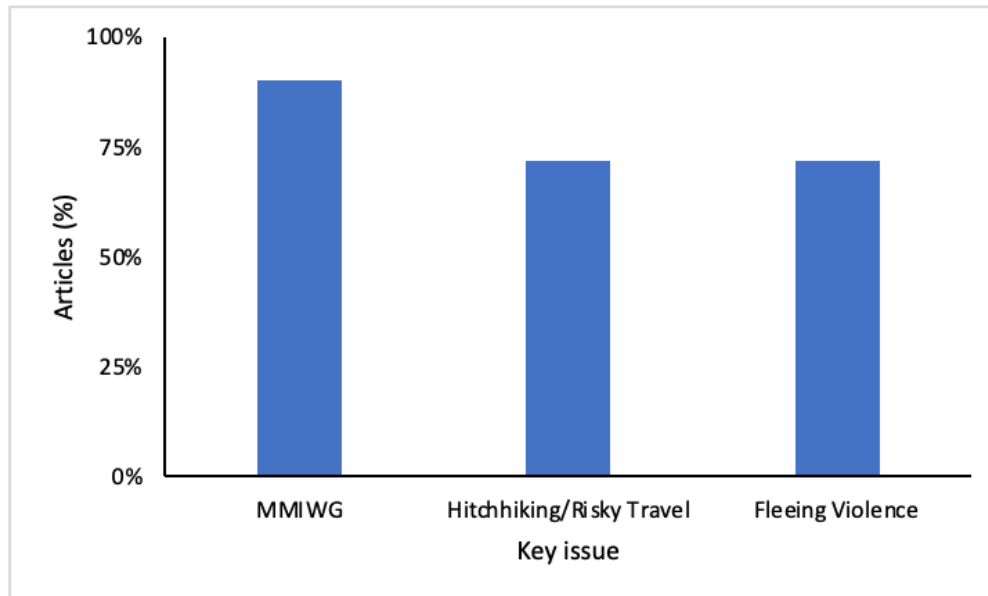
Figure 2: Percentage of articles by source locality.



### 5.4 Key Issues

The results reveal a comprehensive focus on the issue of MMIWG, with an overwhelming majority of articles, 90.2% ( $n = 46$ ), mentioning this issue. Additionally, a substantial percentage of 72% ( $n = 36$ ) of articles address the themes of hitchhiking and risky travel; similarly, 72% ( $n = 36$ ) of articles emphasized the significant issue of lack of transportation options when fleeing violence (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Percentage of articles by key issues.



## 6.0 Thematic Analysis

### 6.1 Transportation Inequities Act as a Significant Barrier for GBV Survivors

Based on the thematic analysis, transportation inequities act as a significant barrier to the safety and well-being of GBV survivors in RRN communities. Advocates highlighted real-life anecdotes in which the absence of affordable transportation directly placed GBV survivors in dangerous circumstances, for example:

A woman with a broken wrist, hitchhiking alongside her 3-year-old child, trying to reach a shelter in Calgary. A woman forced to sleep in the ditch on the side of the highway as she tried to find a ride after escaping an assault. Shelter workers scrambling to get women out of dangerous situations in remote communities (Smith, 2018, para. 2).

Additionally, “Organizations that help the homeless and those fleeing domestic violence say they have lost a vital resource with Greyhound's exit” (“Greyhound exit,” 2018, para. 1). The affordability, reliability, and accessibility that left with Greyhound's exit was an enormous setback for GBV survivors trying to reach shelters. For example, one advocate expressed:

Until Greyhound’s closing in Canada, I frequently bought tickets for others. As an advocate for women escaping intimate partner violence, I helped women secure Greyhound tickets as a key part of their escape plan. Not only were bus tickets the cheapest option for a woman fleeing with little money to her name, they were often the only option for women living in rural, remote and northern areas and in First Nations communities. You could easily secure a same-day ticket, grab your go-bag and slip out of your community in the middle of the night (Lalonde, 2021, para. 8).

## ***6.2 Amplified Systemic Vulnerability of Indigenous Groups***

A key theme across media articles was the discontinuation of Greyhound disproportionately impacted Indigenous communities, with Greyhound routes being “critical for [Indigenous] community connectedness and the safety of Indigenous women and girls” (Transport Canada, 2018, para. 9), and the “loss of [this] vital service puts the safety of Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people at risk” (Riddle, 2018, para. 1. Other advocates further articulated this sentiment, noting that:

Immediately after the service cuts were announced, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) issued a statement calling affordable travel options ‘essential services.’ The Native Women's Association of Canada said they were ‘deeply concerned’ about the safety of Indigenous women, girls and gender-diverse people. And the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women said the cuts to Greyhound routes ‘will exacerbate the risk and vulnerability’ (Smith, 2018, para. 6).

## ***6.3 Need for a National Integrated Transportation System***

The need for an integrated, publicly funded transportation system emerged as a significant theme, with advocates urging “Canada to look beyond simply a national patchwork of for-profit, private transportation options” (Rodriguez, 2021, para. 16). Advocates called on “Federal, provincial and Indigenous governments (...) to collaborate to develop an integrated national public transportation system that is safe, equitable, climate-friendly and accessible - especially for rural, vulnerable and racialized communities” (Alhassan et al., 2021, para. 5). Similarly, the potential of governments to fulfill this was also emphasized in an article, they stated:

because governments have the power, through taxes, to distribute the costs of service across the population as a whole (something they happily do when it comes to car ownership), they are able to operate these services without needing to recoup their investment at the point-of-access. That’s why a national bus service connecting rural and urban Canada is a project best left

to Canada's governments, not to the private sector or to a patchwork of local transportation initiatives (Dalwood, 2023. para. 29).

Paradoxically, the demand for increased subsidized transportation and its subsequent implementation catalyzed Greyhound's exit from Canada. As more low-cost and publicly funded transportation options emerged, Greyhound's routes experienced diminishing profitability, resulting in the company's withdrawal from Canada and a void in transportation for many RRN communities.

## 7.0 Discussion

Based on an initial review of the available academic literature, there have been no other empirical analyses of the impacts of the Greyhound Bus cancellation, particularly in the context of GBV. The results of this paper support that the cancellation of the Greyhound Bus exacerbates barriers to accessing GBV services and perpetuates pre-existing risk factors for those experiencing interpersonal violence as reported in news media.

Given the scope of Greyhound's reach as Canada's unofficial national bus service, the media coverage regarding the Greyhound cancellation with respect to GBV was limited, with only 50 relevant articles identified in our systematic search process. Media publication dates followed a parabolic-like timeline, with the number of articles paralleling the number of reductions and reaching the crux in July of 2018 when the initial decision to cancel the majority of service routes was announced (Harris et al., 2018). Given the transient and rapidly shifting nature of media coverage, it is unsurprising that the attention given to Greyhound Bus cancellations, particularly concerning their impact on individuals experiencing GBV, waned swiftly after the initial announcement. For issues impacting historically marginalized groups, this is particularly problematic because the "hotspot" media coverage is also one of the main avenues of advocacy for change. As shown in the literature on climate change policy reform, which may be used as a proxy for transport policy reform, the fleeting nature of media coverage undermines sustained public awareness and engagement, which are crucial for driving long-term policy reforms and resource allocation (Khatibi et al., 2021). Without continuous media attention, the pressing needs and challenges faced by these communities may remain unaddressed, perpetuating cycles of social inequity. Additionally, sporadic coverage can hinder the mobilization of public support and the accountability and responsiveness of policymakers, further exacerbating the struggles of those who rely on media visibility to amplify their voices and community-led calls to action (Schaffer et al., 2022). While the media coverage has ceased, there is an opportunity for academics, policymakers, and GBV organizations to reinvigorate this dialogue, as the impact of the Greyhound cancellation and issues related to transportation for RRN communities persists (Affordability Action Council, 2024). We recommend further empirical research on the effects of the Greyhound cancellation, and transportation access at-large, on those experiencing GBV and equity-owed communities more broadly. For example, using the Greyhound route cancellations as a temporal marker, there is an opportunity to evaluate bus cancellations from a cost-benefit perspective, leveraging a transportation justice lens (Karner et al., 2020) to measure the relative social and economic cost of the absence of an affordable transportation system in RRN Canada.

Within the available media coverage, 40% were local news sources—mostly from small towns with a locally restricted reach. This relatively high proportion of municipal and local coverage highlights the disconnect between federal decision-making and its tangible consequences for local populations, underscoring the importance of community-level perspectives in understanding the full impact of policy decisions. This also suggests the critical role that local news outlets play in highlighting the specific challenges and concerns of their communities. The prominence of local media coverage suggests that these outlets are more attuned to the immediate and practical implications of bus cancellations for their audiences. This can include disruptions to daily commutes, access to essential services, and connectivity for equity-owed populations. Moreover, the localized nature of the coverage may reflect a gap in broader national media attention, pointing to a potential underrepresentation of these issues in larger media platforms.

One notable caveat of this media review is the absence of a comprehensive understanding of the services implemented in place of Greyhound. Affected communities may have found a better localized solution. The media analysis highlights anecdotes of alternative transportation and grassroots efforts to provide innovative and accessible transportation solutions in RRN communities in response to Greyhound's cancellation. There were local-, municipal-, and provincial-led initiatives to provide transportation to RRN areas, including BC Bus North in British Columbia and Ontario Northland expanded services to cover affected areas. Moreover, private operators like Rider Express and Kasper Transportation extended their routes across Western Canada and Ontario/Manitoba, respectively (Pfeifer, 2018; Spray, 2018). Importantly, Indigenous-led initiatives and government pilot projects, such as Alberta's inter-community bus service, ensured continued connectivity and access to essential services for rural and remote communities. We recommend further research, incorporating a transportation justice lens, to explore alternative transportation plans in RRN communities; moreover, aligning transportation research and solutions with frameworks addressing GBV, IPV, and human trafficking reinforces victim-centred principles that prioritize anonymity, safety, and accessibility, core tenets in trauma-informed and survivor-centred advocacy. Further, specific platforms for knowledge dissemination and mobilization of effective transportation solutions in RRN communities should be prioritized, with dedicated communication channels to discuss safe and affordable options for those fleeing violence.

Regardless of individual communities' adaptations in the wake of the cancellation, intra-provincial transportation is primarily regulated and managed at the provincial level (Transport Canada, 2020). We highlight that provincial governments, in collaboration with community groups and Indigenous leadership, should adhere to this responsibility with a focus on supporting transportation in RRN communities. Following Greyhound's initial service reduction in 2018, a news release from Transport Canada stated that the federal government recognized the significance of the service reduction, especially for Indigenous and RRN communities, and that it would consider providing financial support to provinces to address the transportation gaps (Transport Canada, 2018). To our knowledge, there was no mention of support for Greyhound's remaining routes, and in 2021, Greyhound Bus withdrew from Canada completely (Evans, 2021). A press release from Greyhound stated that pandemic restrictions and subsidized competition, ultimately resulting in reduced ridership and revenue loss, pushed the company to discontinue operations in Canada (Greyhound Canada, 2021). While the leadership at Greyhound made efforts to

obtain funding from provincial and federal governments, the financial aid was negligible. Notably, the federal government offered to subsidize routes left in Greyhounds' initial wake, but the support provided was insufficient for the remaining Greyhound routes. In alignment with recommendations from the Affordability Action Council (Institute for Research on Public Policy, 2024), we recommend collaborative efforts from the provincial and federal governments, to ensure transportation is reliable, affordable, and accessible for individuals living in RRN communities. Further, moving towards a national, integrated transportation system aligns with and *augments* the principles outlined in Canada's National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking (Public Safety Canada, 2019) and the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (Women and Gender Equality Canada, 2022), which advocate for improving transportation infrastructure to support victim protection through accessible, secure transit options.

Although media coverage predominantly highlighted rurality and Indigeneity, we know that living rurally intersects with various other identities—including age, disability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status, which collectively influence both the risk of violence and access to safe transportation (Dale et al., 2021). As such, integrating intersectional perspectives is imperative in advancing transportation policy. In advocating for transportation policy reform, it is crucial to recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach will not adequately address the unique needs of those living at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities. Intersectional considerations are essential to ensure that policies protect and support those most vulnerable to transportation inequities and violence (Dale et al., 2021). Policies grounded in transportation justice should actively address the compounded barriers experienced by diverse groups, helping to reduce risks and improve safe transit access across RRN communities. While the media articles reviewed in this analysis primarily focus on Indigenous women, it is essential to acknowledge that living in rural areas intersects with other identities such as age, ability, sexual orientation, religion, and socio-economic status. The convergence of these identities simultaneously impacts both the risk of violence and the access to safe transportation options for individuals. Thus, intersectional considerations are imperative when moving forward with transportation policy and advocacy (Dale et al., 2021). Policies must account for the unique challenges faced by individuals at these intersections to ensure that all community members, particularly those who are vulnerable, have equitable access to safe and reliable transportation solutions (Dale et al., 2021).

While limited access to transportation perpetuates GBV, the solution of accessible public transit is not without limitations. It is necessary to consider that GBV still occurs on public transit; among women in Canada who experienced unwanted public sexual behaviour, 13% reported that the most serious instance occurred on public transit (Cotter & Savage, 2019). Transit users with intersecting factors related to gender, race, income, and ability were especially vulnerable to harassment from other transit users, as well as transit staff (Lubitow et al., 2017; Tiznado-Aitken, 2024). Thus, transportation policies must consider equitable access to transit in conjunction with safety within transit systems.

### **7.1 Limitations**

There are a few key limitations to our analysis. First, we only reviewed articles published in English, and given that Canada is a bilingual country, we may have missed essential articles. Our focus was on media presentation of issues related to

Greyhound Bus cancellation and GBV, as such, it was beyond the scope of our work to review government documents. These resources may have presented an alternative take on the issue. Finally, we did not review the gray literature for local/regional solutions to the Greyhound Bus cancellations.

## 7.2 Conclusions/Key Takeaways

This analysis identified three key themes: (1) transportation inequities are significant barriers for GBV survivors in RRN spaces; (2) Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by the termination of Greyhound services; and (3) advocates emphasize the need for an integrated national transportation system, created through collaborative efforts between all levels of government. The cancellations received short-lived media attention, although sustained media interest is crucial for tangible change through policy reform. Future research should aim to understand how communities have adapted to Greyhound cancellations and connect with local community members to understand their perspectives and synthesize developments at the grassroots level. By integrating transportation justice within established victim advocacy frameworks, including those addressing IPV and human trafficking, a national transportation strategy could provide a consistent, protective, and accessible solution for survivors across a spectrum of victimization experiences. As aforementioned, we recommend the following: social and economic cost-benefit research on the effects of the Greyhound cancellation, especially on GBV survivors and equity-owed populations, and collaborative efforts from all levels of government in developing accessible transportation for RRN communities.

## References

- Affordability Action Council. (2024). *Rural recognition: Affordable and safe transportation options for remote communities*. Institute for Research on Public Policy. <https://irpp.org/research-studies/affordable-safe-transportation-options-remote-communities/#:~:text=Rural%20Residents%20Face%20Increasing%20Transport%20Poverty&text=People%20living%20in%20these%20areas,significantly%20smaller%20public%20transit%20systems>
- Ahassan, J. A. K., Hanson, C., & Hanson, L. (2021, June 16). Canada needs a national public transportation system - here's why. *The Canadian Press*. <https://theconversation.com/canada-needs-a-national-public-transportation-system-heres-why-161786>
- Beiler, M. O., & Mohammed, M. (2016). Exploring transportation equity: Development and application of a transportation justice framework. *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, 47, 285–298. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trd.2016.06.007>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bullard, R. D. (2003). Addressing urban transportation equity in the United States. *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, 31(5), 1183–1209. <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/ulj/vol31/iss5/2>

- Conroy, S. (2024). *Spousal violence in Canada, 2019*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00016-eng.htm>
- Conroy, S., Burczycka, M., & Savage, L. (2019). *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2018*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00018-eng.pdf>
- Cotter, A., & Savage, L. (2019). *Gender-based violence and unwanted sexual behaviour in Canada: 2018 Initial findings from a survey on safety in public and private spaces*. Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2019001/article/00017-eng.htm>
- Dale, A., Maki, K., & Nitia, R. (2021, April 30). *Expert engagement to address and prevent gender-based violence final report*. Roadmap for the National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence. <https://nationalactionplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/NAP-Final-Report.pdf>
- Dalwood, C. (2023, July 4). It's time for a national bus service. *Rabble*. <https://rabble.ca/columnists/its-time-for-a-national-bus-service/>
- El Kady, D., Gilbert, W. M., Xing, G., & Smith, L. H. (2005). Maternal and neonatal outcomes of assaults during pregnancy. *Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 105(2), 357–363. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.AOG.0000151109.46641.03>
- Evans, P. (2021, May 13). Greyhound Canada shutting down all bus service permanently. *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/greyhound-canada-1.6025276#:~:text=Greyhound%20Canada%20is%20shutting%20down,of%20Western%20Canada%20in%202018>
- Greyhound Canada. (2021, May 13). Greyhound Canada closes its services in Canada. *NewsWire*. <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/greyhound-canada-closes-its-services-in-canada-839752331.html>
- Greyhound exit leaves gap for homeless, domestic violence shelters. (2018, November 3). *The Globe and Mail*.
- Harris, T., Brennan, D., & Hamdi, I. (2018, July 10). End of the road for Greyhound in Western Canada: Company cites ridership decline in decision to cancel bus routes. *Toronto Star*.
- Heidinger, L. (2021). *Intimate partner violence: Experiences of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women in Canada, 2018*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2021001/article/00007-eng.htm>
- Institute for Research on Public Policy. (2024, January 29). *Affordability Action Council calls for tailored solutions to address transportation issues in urban and rural areas across Canada*. <https://irpp.org/news-release/affordability-action-council-calls-for-tailored-solutions-to-address-transportation/>
- Karner, A., London, J., Rowangould, D., & Manaugh, K. (2020). From transportation equity to transportation justice: Within, through, and beyond the state. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 35(4), 440–459. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0885412220927691>



- Khatibi, F. S., Dedekorkut-Howes, A., Howes, M., & Torabi, E. (2021). Can public awareness, knowledge and engagement improve climate change adaptation policies? *Discover Sustainability*, 2(18). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-021-00024-z>
- Lalonde, S. J. (2021, May 20). Without Greyhound buses, small-town residents are losing a lifeline. *The Globe and Mail*.
- Lambert, S., & Graveland, B. (2018, July 10). Loss of Greyhound bus service makes some rural areas 'feel cut off'. *Global News*. <https://globalnews.ca/news/4323209/greyhound-bus-service-cuts-western-canada-rural-areas/>
- Lubitow, A., Carathers, J., Kelly, M., & Abelson, M. (2017). Transmobilities: mobility, harassment, and violence experienced by transgender and gender nonconforming public transit riders in Portland, Oregon. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 24(10), 1398–1418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1382451>
- Lucas, K., Mattioli, G., Verlinghieri, E., & Guzman, A. (2016). Transport poverty and its adverse social consequences. *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers - Transport*, 169(6), 353–365. <https://doi.org/10.1680/jtran.15.00073>
- Maki, K. (2018). *Mapping VAW shelters and transition houses: Initial finding of a national survey*. Women's Shelters Canada. <https://endvaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Mapping-VAW-Shelters-2018.pdf>
- Moffitt, P., Aujla, W., Giesbrecht, C. J., Grant, I., & Straatman, A. L. (2022). Intimate partner violence and COVID-19 in rural, remote, and Northern Canada: Relationship, vulnerability and risk. *Journal of Family Violence*, 37(5), 775–786. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-020-00212-x>
- Morin, B. (2021, November 8). The stench of death on Canada's Highway of Tears. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/longform/2021/11/8/the-stench-of-death-life-along-canadas-highway-of-tears>
- National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). *Reclaiming power and place: Final report of the national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls* (Vol. 1a). Privy Council Office. <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/#:~:text=Women%20and%20Girls-,Reclaiming%20Power%20and%20Place,women%2C%20girls%20and%20SLGBTQIA%20people>.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2020). *Linking Indigenous communities with regional development in Canada*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/fa0f60c6-en>
- Pfeifer, S. (2018, July 10). Ontario bus service to pick up in Manitoba where Greyhound leaves off. *Global News*. <https://globalnews.ca/news/4324017/ontario-bus-company-expanding-to-pick-up-where-greyhound-leaves-off/>
- Public Safety Canada. (2019). *National strategy to combat human trafficking: 2019–2024*. Government of Canada. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2019-ntnl-strtg-hmnn-trffc/2019-ntnl-strtg-hmnn-trffc-en.pdf>

- Riddle, E. (2018, July 11). Cutting Greyhound service in the West puts Indigenous women at risk. *The Globe and Mail*.
- Rodriguez, J. (2021, May 25). Indigenous, rural residents left 'more isolated' after Greyhound leaves Canada. *CTV News*.  
<https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/indigenous-rural-residents-left-more-isolated-after-greyhound-leaves-canada-1.5442354?cache=zviomxnayn>
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Vol. 3). Canada Communication Group.  
[https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2016/bcp-pco/Z1-1991-1-3-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/bcp-pco/Z1-1991-1-3-eng.pdf)
- Schaffer, L. M., Oehl, B., & Bernauer, T. (2022). Are policymakers responsive to public demand in climate politics? *Journal of Public Policy*, 42(1), 136–164.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0143814X21000088>
- Smith, M. (2018, July 24). Loss of Greyhound buses 'is going to lead to deaths,' say advocates to end domestic violence. *StarMetro*.
- Spray, H. (2018, October 28). Rider Express adds former Greyhound routes in western Canada. *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*.  
<https://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/rider-express-adds-former-greyhound-routes-in-western-canada>
- Statistics Canada. (2019). *Gender-based violence and unwanted sexual behaviour in Canada, 2018: Initial findings from the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/191205/dq191205b-eng.htm>
- Statistics Canada. (2021). *Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018*.  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210426/dq210426b-eng.htm>
- Statistics Canada. (2022). *Dictionary, census of population, 2021: Rural area (RA)*.  
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/dict/az/Definition-eng.cfm?ID=geo042>
- Tiznado-Aitken, I., Guerrero B, T. E., & Sagaris, L. (2024). Uncovering gender-based violence and harassment in public transport: Lessons for spatial and transport justice. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 114, 103766.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2023.103766>
- Transport Canada. (2018). *The government of Canada addresses Greyhound Canada's discontinuation of bus routes*. Government of Canada.  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/transport-canada/news/2018/10/the-government-of-canada-addresses-greyhound-canadas-discontinuation-of-bus-routes.html>
- Transport Canada. (2020). *Governance of the Canadian Transportation System*. Government of Canada. <https://tc.canada.ca/en/corporate-services/policies/governance-canadian-transportation-system>
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *The survivors speak: A report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. (2015). Author.  
[https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Survivors\\_Speak\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Survivors_Speak_English_Web.pdf)

- Umereweneza, P., Lovrod, M., Findlay, I.M., Giesbrecht, C., Valle-Castro, M., Mason, N., Anaquod, J., & Hoffart, R. (2020). *Sexual violence in Saskatchewan: Voices, stories, insights, and actions from the front lines*. Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan. <https://sassk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SASS-CUIISR-Sexual-Violence-Final-Report-April-30.pdf>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2024). *Gender-based violence*. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/protection/gender-based-violence>
- Women and Gender Equality Canada. (2022). *National action plan to end gender-based violence*. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/gender-based-violence/intergovernmental-collaboration/national-action-plan-end-gender-based-violence/first-national-action-plan-end-gender-based-violence.html>
- World Health Organization. (2013). *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. [https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/85239/9789241564625\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/85239/9789241564625_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- Zhang, T., Hoddenbagh, J., McDonald, S., & Scrim, K. (2012). *An estimation of the economic impact of spousal violence in Canada, 2009*. Government of Canada Department of Justice. [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/rr12\\_7/rr12\\_7.pdf](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/fv-vf/rr12_7/rr12_7.pdf)