



MEASURING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: STATISTICAL TRENDS – KEY FINDINGS

This fact sheet provides an overview of key statistical data included in *Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends* (2013). The full report can be accessed at www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf.

Violence against Women in Canada

Key Facts

- **Violence against women continues to be a serious problem in Canada. While significant efforts have been made in recent decades, much work remains to be done to prevent and respond to the violence that persists in both the public and private spheres of women's lives.**
- **Both police-reported and self-reported data show women are more likely than men to be the victims of specific forms of violence, such as intimate partner violence, severe forms of spousal violence, sexual violence and stalking.**
- **The actual incidence of violent acts against women and girls is estimated to be much higher than official police-reported statistics suggest, as a large percentage of this violence goes unreported.**

Prevalence and severity

- Police-reported data show just over 173,600 women aged 15 and older were the victims of violent crime in 2011, a rate of 1,207 victims for every 100,000 women in the Canadian population. This is slightly higher than the rate of violent crime against men.
- While overall rates of violent crime against men and women are similar, women are more likely to experience certain forms of violence. For example, according to police-reported data, women were 11 times more likely than men to be sexually victimized, and three times as likely to be stalked.
- Police-reported data indicate that some forms of violence against women, such as attempted murder and physical assault, have decreased in recent years. However, the incidence of other offences increased or remained stable; sexual assault, for example, increased in 2010 and remained stable in 2011.

- Self-reported data show the rate of violent victimization against women 15 years and over remained relatively stable between 1999 and 2009. As is the case with police-reported data, the risks and trends of certain types of victimization vary between women and men. Physical assault was the one victimization type where women had a lower risk than men, a consistent finding over time.
- Overall, men were responsible for the majority of violence committed against women (83%). Male accused accounted for 60% of police-reported violence committed by friends or acquaintances, 68% of non-spousal family violence, 74% of stranger violence and 98% of intimate partner violence.
- The rate of police-reported violent crime against women is higher in the territories than elsewhere in Canada. In 2011, the rate in the Yukon was four times higher than the national average, the rate in the Northwest Territories was nine times higher and the rate in Nunavut was nearly 13 times higher.
- Provincially, the prevalence of violence against women generally reflects regional variations in overall violent crime. According to police-reported data, Saskatchewan and Manitoba consistently record the highest police-reported rates of violence against women, and in 2011 recorded about double the national rate. In contrast, Ontario and Quebec have the lowest rates in the country. For self-reported violent victimization against women, rates are similar across the provinces.

Risk factors

- While violence against women crosses all socio-demographic boundaries, data suggest that some groups of women and girls are more at risk. The likelihood of being violently victimized can differ based on socio-demographic factors, lifestyle behaviours and community characteristics, as well as other life events. For example, previous experiences of emotional and financial abuse can be specific risk factors for escalating spousal violence.
- Both self-reported and police-reported data indicate that younger women are most at risk of violence.
- Aboriginal women continue to have higher rates of police-reported and self-reported spousal and non-spousal violence than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. According to the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS), the rate of self-reported violent victimization against Aboriginal women in the provinces was about 2.5 times higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal women.
- Self-reported data indicate that single women are most at risk of violent victimization. The rate of non-spousal victimization for single women was approximately four times higher than the rate for women in legally married or common-law relationships, and three times higher than for women who were separated, divorced or widowed.

Impacts

- Not only do victims suffer emotional and physical harm, but their feelings of safety and perceptions of well-being are often affected by their victimization experiences, as indicated by the 2009 GSS findings. Women generally fear crime to a greater degree than men. Self-reported victimization data show this fear is higher among women who have been the victims of non-spousal violence.
- Experiences of violent crime also significantly impact women's mental health and emotional wellbeing, to a greater degree than men. For example, according to the 2009 GSS, female victims of spousal violence were seven times more likely than male victims to be fearful, three times more likely to be depressed or anxious, and twice as likely to be angry. The consequences of non-spousal violence parallel these statistics, though men and women were about equally as likely to feel angry about the non-spousal violent incident (34% and 31%).


Responses

- Despite significant improvements in criminal justice responses to violence against women over the previous 30 years, victimization data indicates that violence against women is often not reported to the police. For example, the 2009 GSS shows less than one-third of female victims indicated that the incident of spousal victimization was reported to police, a decrease from 36% in 2004.
- The reporting of violence against women committed outside of a spousal relationship has been relatively stable since 2009 (28%); rates are identical for women and men.

- Reasons for not reporting to police were similar for both spousal and non-spousal violence. The most commonly stated reasons were that it was dealt with in another way, it was a personal matter, it was not important enough, and that the victim did not want to get involved with police. Although this was similar for both male and female victims, fear of retaliation was a greater concern for female than male victims (18% versus 9%).
- Seventy-six percent of violent incidents against women that were reported to and substantiated by police were solved. About seven in 10 of these resulted in a charge being laid or recommended.
- Of all the violent crimes reported by women, sexual assaults by someone other than a spouse are least likely to come to the attention of police.

Emerging areas and future directions

- The updated version of *Measuring Violence against Women: Statistical Trends* not only adds to the existing body of evidence on gender-based violence, but also expands our knowledge into new areas. The current report includes information on dating violence, violence against girls and violence that occurs outside the intimate partner/family context.
- The report also explores the economic costs of violence for the first time. Adding an economic dimension to the analysis of violence against women is an important undertaking, as it broadens our understanding of individual and societal costs. Most recently, a 2013 study by the Department of Justice Canada estimated the cost of spousal violence against women in Canada at \$4.8 billion in 2009.¹

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- Data gaps persist in areas such as human trafficking. In Canada, trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation is more prevalent than for forced labour.ⁱⁱ Women and children are disproportionately the victims of this crime, with youth and Aboriginal women and girls being particularly at risk. Federal, provincial and territorial governments are undertaking significant efforts to address human trafficking, but further work is needed as the scope of the issue has yet to be fully understood.
 - More effort is needed to understand how to combat online bullying and cyber-violence. The tremendous increase in the use of technology is accompanied by its misuse. Future initiatives could reveal new ways to use technology to prevent and respond to this form of violence against women and girls.
 - It is also important to continue to address the needs of diverse groups of women, for example, Aboriginal women and immigrant and visible minority women.
 - Enhancing knowledge and information is necessary to gain a more complete picture of the gendered dimensions of violence and emerging areas of concern. This, in turn, will support future research, programmatic and policy initiatives to improve the response to those who experience violence.

ⁱ www.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/rs/rep-rap/2012/rr12_7/rr12_7.pdf

ⁱⁱ www.gov.mb.ca/msw/publications/human_trafficking.pdf