



# By the Numbers: Violence Against Women and Girls in Canada

**Violence against women and girls includes** domestic violence (intimate partner violence, or IPV, and family violence), sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and sex trafficking. Domestic violence can be:

- Physical (using hands or objects as weapons, assault, murder)
- Sexual (using threats, intimidation, or physical force in unwanted sexual acts)
- Emotional or verbal (threats against others or self, humiliating or degrading comments, isolation, confinement, destruction of property)
- Financial (stealing or controlling money or valuables, forcing her to work, not allowing her to work)
- Spiritual (using her beliefs to manipulate, dominate, and control her)
- Harassment/stalking
- Reproductive (forcing her to use a particular form of birth control or none at all, coerced abortions, forced pregnancy)



Spousal violence is consistently the most common form of violence against women in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

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7 in 10 people who experience family violence are women and girls.<sup>2</sup>

Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16.<sup>3</sup>

Of all sexual assault incidents in 2014, 87% were committed against women. Women self-reported 555,000 incidents of sexual assault in 2014.<sup>4</sup>

**Domestic violence and violence against women can affect anyone, regardless of race, creed, age, sexual orientation, ability, or economic status. However, some groups of women do experience higher rate of violence.**

Rates of spousal violence and homicide are highest for women ages 15-24.<sup>5</sup>

In 2013, the rates of violent crime in the territories and Provincial North<sup>6</sup> was more than twice as high as in Southern Canada. Rates of female victims of violent crime were 8 times higher in the territories and nearly 3 times higher in the Provincial North than in the South.<sup>7</sup>

Indigenous women are 2.7 times more likely to be victims of violence than non-Indigenous women.<sup>8</sup> Reporting rates of spousal violence against Indigenous women are 3 times higher than those against non-Indigenous women.<sup>9</sup>

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Women living with physical and cognitive impairments experience violence 2-3 times more often than women living without impairments.<sup>10</sup> 60% of women with a disability experience some form of violence.<sup>11</sup>

Immigrant, refugee, and non-status women experience unique forms of abuse such as threats of reporting them to immigration authorities and potential deportation.<sup>12</sup>



Lesbian and bisexual women were 3-4 times more likely than heterosexual women to report experiencing IPV in the past 5 years (may include opposite-sex relationships).<sup>13</sup>

Transgender people are almost twice as likely to report ever experiencing IPV, compared to the average rate experienced by cis-gender women and men.<sup>14</sup>

4 in 10 (42%) women IPV survivors reported being physically injured. The most common types of injuries reported were bruises (95%), followed by cuts, scratches, or burns (30%).<sup>15</sup>

According to the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization, approximately 63,300 (11%) of women self-reported being victimized by a spouse while they were pregnant.<sup>16</sup>



In 2011, men were responsible for 83% of police-reported violence against women. Most commonly, the accused was the woman's intimate partner (both spousal and dating) (45%).<sup>17</sup>

## Homicide

Women are 4 times more likely than men to be victims of intimate partner homicide.<sup>18</sup>

Approximately every 6 days, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. Out of the 83 police-reported intimate partner homicides in 2014, 67 - over 80% - of the victims were women.<sup>19</sup>

### Reported Intimate Partner Homicide Victims, 2014



Source: Statistics Canada 2015<sup>20</sup>



Indigenous women are 6 times more likely to be killed than non-Indigenous women.<sup>21</sup>

According to the RCMP, there were 1,181 cases of missing or murdered Indigenous women in Canada between 1980-2012.<sup>22</sup> However, grassroots organizations and the Minister of the Status of Women Canada put the number much higher, closer to 4,000.<sup>23</sup>



Women's shelters and transition houses provide a safe place to heal and recover from abuse. The services offered extend far beyond sheltering. Shelters create community, provide multiple programs, and help rebuild lives.

Women's shelters offer a variety of services such as 24/7 counselling, children's programs, parenting classes, mental health and addiction services, nutritional classes and community kitchens, legal and housing services, men's programs, and assistance with applications to educational and apprenticeship programs. Women do not need to stay in shelter to receive these services. Many women's shelters and transition houses operate from a feminist, trauma-informed, and harm reduction approach.<sup>24</sup>



There are over 500 women's shelters and transition houses for women and children fleeing violence in Canada.<sup>25</sup>

On any given night in Canada, 3,491 women and their 2,724 children sleep in shelters because it isn't safe at home.<sup>26</sup> And about 300 women and children are turned away because shelters are already full.<sup>27</sup> Hundreds more are assisted through outreach programs, groups, and services.<sup>28</sup>

A 2016 WSC survey of 234 shelters found that 97% of shelters said they accepted women from other provinces and territories.<sup>29</sup>

## Underreporting and broken systems

According to the 2014 GSS on Victimization, 83% of sexual assault incidents were not reported to the police.<sup>30</sup>

When racialized women report violence, their cases are taken less seriously and perpetrators often receive less harsh punishments within the criminal justice system.<sup>31</sup>

Research from the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has found that homicides involving Indigenous women are more likely to go unsolved. Only 53% of murder cases in NWAC's database have been solved, compared to 84% of all murder cases across the country.<sup>32</sup>



### Reports of Intimate Partner Violence, 2014



Reported to police (30%)  
unreported (70%)

Source: Statistics Canada 2016<sup>33</sup>

## Barriers to Leaving

Studies have found that threats to women's safety and the potential for severe violence and homicide is heightened when they leave an abuser.<sup>34</sup> One study found that 75% of women entering VAW shelters were in "extreme" or "severe" danger.<sup>35</sup>



WSC annual surveys of VAW shelters have consistently found that the lack of safe and affordable housing is the primary reason women return to their abusers.<sup>36</sup> 30% of shelters surveyed had no social housing options in their region.<sup>37</sup> Poverty and loss of housing are significant barriers to leaving an abusive relationship.<sup>38</sup>

IPV also has an impact on women in their workplaces. A 2015 study from the Canadian Labour Congress found that more than half (53%) of respondents said that at least one type of abusive act happened at or near their workplace. Almost 40% of those who had experienced domestic abuse said it made it difficult for them to get to work, and 8.5% said they lost jobs because of it.<sup>39</sup>

Immigrant, refugee, and non-status women face particular barriers in accessing justice and social services due to the lack of access to information about their rights, language barriers, isolation, or not knowing where to turn for help.<sup>40</sup>

## Underfunding

In 2016, 40% of 234 women's shelters surveyed identified diminishing or stagnant government funding as one of their top three challenges in the past year. 56% of responding shelters and transition houses must renew their funding contracts on a year-to-year basis.<sup>41</sup>



While many women's shelters and THs receive inadequate government funding, on-reserve shelters serving Indigenous women, children, and families receive up to 50% less than their provincial counterparts.<sup>42</sup>

In 2016, the federal department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs reported that it provided funding for only 41 shelters to serve the 634 recognized First Nations communities in Canada.<sup>43</sup>

There are only 15 shelters and transition houses serving 53 Inuit communities across the North. Many of these shelters are small and only accessible by air or ice roads.<sup>44</sup>

## References

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- <sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada. (2016). "Infographic: Family Violence in Canada 2014." [Available here](#)
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- <sup>5</sup> Sinha (2013a).
- <sup>6</sup> The Provincial North refers to the northern regions of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Labrador. See Allen, M., and Perreault, S. (2015). Police-reported crime in Canada's Provincial North and Territories, 2013. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-x. [Available here](#)
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- <sup>17</sup> Sinha (2013b: 8).
- <sup>18</sup> Miladinovic, Z. and Mulligan, Leah. (2015: 23). Homicide in Canada, 2014. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-x. Ottawa, Ontario. [Available here](#)
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- <sup>26</sup> Beattie, S. and Hutchins, H. (2015). Shelters for Abused Women in Canada, 2014. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-x. Ottawa, Ontario. [Available here](#)
- <sup>27</sup> This calculation based on 201 children and 338 women (539 people total), 56% of whom were turned away from shelters already at capacity on the snapshot date of April 16, 2014 (Beattie and Hutchins 2015).
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