



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.

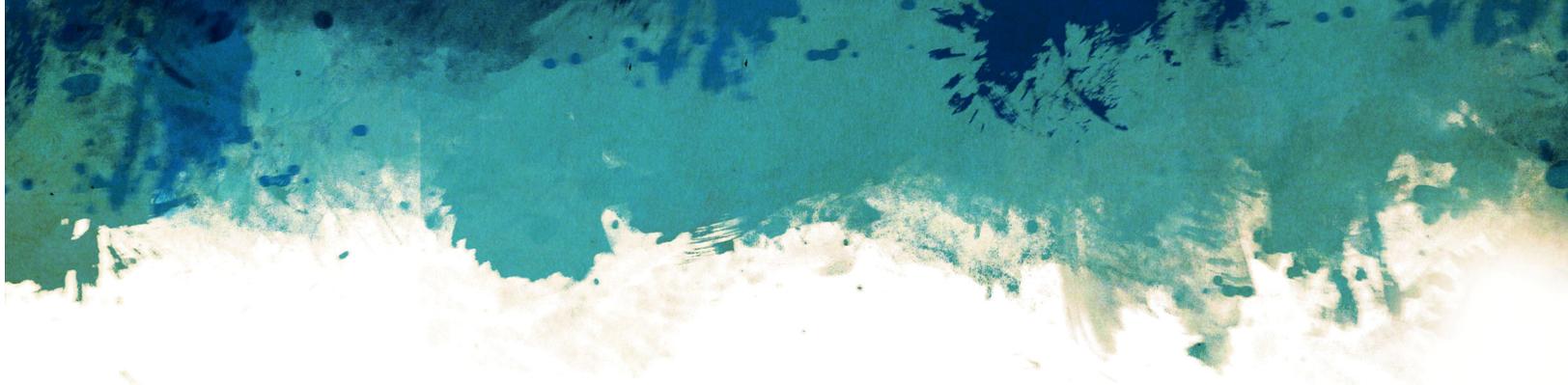
Sexual Violence

Key Facts

- **Despite reported decreases in some forms of violence against women, rates of sexual assault have not decreased in recent years.**
- **According to police-reported data, women continue to be particularly vulnerable to this form of violence, and are 11 times more likely than men to be sexually victimized.**
- **Actual rates of sexual violence are likely much higher than official estimates, as the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS) indicates that nine out of 10 non-spousal sexual assaults were never reported to police.**

Prevalence and severity

- Based on police-reported data in 2009, there were over 15,500 victims of sexual offences aged 15 years and older, most of whom were female (92%). Of these, the vast majority (91%) were level 1 sexual assaults.ⁱ The remaining offences included voyeurism and sexual exploitation as well as the most severe sexual assaults (levels 2 and 3).
- While rates of police-reported sexual offences were much higher for women than men in every province, rates were consistently elevated in the western provinces.ⁱⁱ
- Self-reported data reveal a similar trend, with women more likely than men to be the victims of sexual assault. According to the 2009 General Social Survey (GSS), women were the victims in seven out of 10 incidents of self-reported sexual assault.
- In 2009, 81% of self-reported sexual assault incidents against women involved unwanted sexual touching; the remaining 19% involved sexual attacks. These patterns in the nature of sexual victimization against women have remained constant over the last 10 years.
- Sexual assaults perpetrated by someone other than a spouse were least likely to come to the attention of police. Nine in 10 non-spousal sexual assaults were never reported to police.



Risk factors

- Age is one of the known risk factors. Although girls and boys under 12 are at similar risk for experiencing violence, there are differences in the type of violence. Police-reported sexual offences were by far the most common offence against girls under 12 years of age.
- In particular, 47% of all violent crimes against girls that were reported to police were sexual in nature, most commonly level 1 sexual assaults (69%), followed by child-specific sexual offences (28%) such as sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, and luring a child via a computer.
- Female youth (aged 12-17) have a higher risk of experiencing violence than boys and male youth, particularly related to sexual offences. In 2011, females in this age group were eight times more likely than male youth to be victims of sexual assault or another type of sexual offence.
- The prevalence of sexual offences, like other violent crimes, is substantially higher in Canada's territories. Women's risk in the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut was almost four, nine and 13 times greater, respectively, than the provincial average.
- Women may also be more at risk in some relationships. In 2011, women knew their sexual attacker in three-quarters of police-reported incidents: 45% as a casual acquaintance or friend, 17% as an intimate partner and 13% as a non-spousal family member. One-quarter of sexual assaults against women were committed by a stranger.

Impacts

- According to police-reported data for 2011, women were more likely than men to sustain injury in cases of sexual violence (25% versus 15%).

Responses

- Forty-four percent of all sexual offences against women committed in 2011 were unsolved, meaning that an accused was either not identified or there was deemed insufficient evidence to lay a charge.
- Women represented the majority of victims assisted by formal victim services. Among female clients who were victims of violent crime, 35% were seeking help to deal with a sexual-based crime.

ⁱ Sexual assault level 1 refers to an assault committed in circumstances of a sexual nature such that the sexual integrity of the victim is violated. It involves minor or no injuries to the victim. Sexual assault level 2 refers to sexual assault with a weapon, threats or causing bodily harm. Sexual assault level 3 refers to aggravated sexual assault that results in wounding, maiming, disfiguring or endangering the life of the victim.

ⁱⁱ While regional variations can signify actual differences in prevalence, other explanations need to be taken into account. These include differences in perceptions of sexual assault and its impact on a victim's willingness to report to police, as well as variations in demographic profile, access to services for victims, and police training.