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# Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2005

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# Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2005

*Edited by Kathy AuCoin*

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## Symbols

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- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0<sup>s</sup> value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- <sup>p</sup> preliminary
- <sup>r</sup> revised
- x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published

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# Highlights

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## Chapter 1 – Trends in self-reported spousal violence

- According to the 2004 General Social Survey it is estimated that 7% of Canadians 15 years of age and over in a current, previous or common-law union experienced spousal violence in the previous 5 years. This is unchanged from previous results in 1999.
- Rates of spousal violence by a current or previous partner in the 5 year period were 7% for women and 6% for men, representing an estimated 653,000 women and 546,000 men. While there was no statistically significant change in the level of spousal violence against men since 1999 (7% versus 6%), there was a small but statistically significant decline for women during this period (8% versus 7%).
- When looking at the most serious types of violence reported to the survey, it was found that a larger proportion of women reported being beaten, choked, or threatened with or had a gun or knife used against them by their intimate partner than were men (23% versus 15%).
- Women were also much more likely to report that they were the targets of more than ten violent incidents at the hands of their partner (21% versus 11%), and more likely to state that they were injured as a result of the violence (44% versus 18%).
- It was also found that female victims of spousal violence were three times more likely than male victims of spousal violence to fear for their life (34% versus 10%) and three times more likely to take time off from their everyday activities because of the violence (29% versus 10%).
- The most pronounced changes in spousal violence between 1999 and 2004 have been within previous relationships. While violence in previous relationships remain significantly higher than that in current unions, the percentage in these relationships who have experienced violence dropped significantly for both women (from 28% in 1999 to 21% in 2004) and men (from 22% to 16%).
- Violence in current unions has remained relatively stable. In 1999 it was found that 4% of both men and women in current marital or common-law relationships experienced either physical or sexual violence from their partner. In 2004 there was no significant change in rates for either women or men in current relationships.
- According to the 2004 GSS those who are between the ages of 15 and 24 who live in a common-law relationship, who have been in a relationship for three years or less, and whose partner is a frequent heavy drinker, defined as consuming five or more drinks on one occasion, five or more times per month, are at increased risk of experiencing violence at the hands of their intimate partner.
- While the rate of spousal violence among those who are gay or lesbian was twice the rate of reported violence experienced by those who are heterosexual (15% versus 7%), the survey found that those who indicated that their sexual orientation is gay or lesbian were more likely not to have a current partner (40% versus 16%) than those who are heterosexual. Survey data show that rates of spousal violence are highest among those who are common-law and who have a previous partner/spouse.
- Aboriginal people were three times more likely to be victims of spousal violence than were those who were non-Aboriginal (21% versus 7%).



- More than one-half (58%) of those who indicated they were stalked by a current or previous marital or common-law partner in the past 5 years also self-reported being the victim of spousal violence during the same time period. This was especially true in the case of female victims of intimate partner stalking (61%) though this figure was also high for male stalking victims (48%).
- Results found that 27% of victims of spousal violence reported the incident to police, this proportion is relatively unchanged from that which was reported in 1999 (28%). Results also found that a larger proportion of female victims of spousal violence reported the incidents to the police relative to male victims (37% versus 17%).
- About one-third (32%) of spousal violence victims who reported to the police also had a restraining order or protective order against their abuser. Female victims of spousal violence who had reported the violence to the police were much more likely to seek the protection of a restraining or protective order than were their male counterparts (38% versus 15%).
- In both 1999 and 2004, about one-third (34%) of victims (47% of female victims and 20% of male victims) indicated that they had turned to a formal help agency because of the violence.

## Chapter 2 – Stalking-criminal harassment

- According to the 2004 General Social Survey, more than 1.4 million females 15 years of age and older (11% of the population) and just under one million males (7% of the population) were stalked in the preceding five years of the survey in a way that caused them to fear for their life or someone known to them.
- Obscene phone calls (47%), being spied on (28%), and being threatened or intimidated (43%) were the most frequently reported forms of stalking experienced by female victims.
- The majority of victims (80%) were stalked by males regardless of the sex of the victim. The most common gender patterns between stalking victims – offenders were female-male (53%), followed by male-male (28%).
- Results of the 2004 GSS indicate that Aboriginal people are twice as likely as non-Aboriginal people to have reported experiencing some form of stalking in the previous five years which caused them to fear for their life (17% versus 9%).
- As a means of coping with the stalking, more than one third of female stalking victims (35%) chose not to go out alone, while 15% of female and 10% of male stalking victims chose to change their residence.
- Close to one third of stalking victims feared for their life, 31% of female and 27% of male victims. Level of fear experienced by victims was influenced by the relationship between the victim and the stalker. Of those victims stalked by an ex-spouse, close to two thirds of female victims feared for their life (60%) while this was the case for 44% of male victims stalked by an ex-spouse.
- Almost half of victims stalked by an ex-intimate partner (45%) reported the stalking to police while only 35% of those stalked by a stranger and 36% pursued by an acquaintance reported the behavior to the police.
- Of those stalking incidents reported to the police, charges were laid against the perpetrator in just under one quarter of incidents (23%). The charges that were laid included assault (50%), uttering threats (49%), criminal harassment (46%) and other charges (24%).
- Just over one in ten stalking victims (11%) sought out a protective/restraining order against the stalker. A larger proportion of female victims obtained a restraining order relative to male victims (12% versus 9%). Just under one half of these orders were violated (49%).

### Chapter 3 – Family homicides

- Between 1974 and 2003, the rate of spousal homicide against females has typically been 4 to 5 times higher than the rate of male spousal homicide. The rate of spousal homicide declined from 16.5 per million spouses in 1974 to 7.5 for female victims in 2003 and from 4.4 per million spouses in 1974 to 1.7 for male victims in 2003.
- Common-law spouses and those separated from a spouse were overrepresented as victims of spousal homicide relative to their population in Canada. A larger proportion of separated women were killed by a spouse compared to separated men (26% compared to 11%) while a larger proportion of males (54%) were killed by their common-law partner compared to females (35%).
- Between 1994 and 2003, females aged 15-to-24 had the highest rate of spousal homicide (22.5 per million female spouses). This rate is nearly 3 times the overall rate of spousal homicide for female victims during the same period (7.7 per million female spouses) and nearly 3 times the rate of males aged 15-to-24 (8.5 per million male spouses).
- Between 1994 and 2003, two-thirds of solved homicides against children and youth were committed by a family member (67%), the vast majority of which were committed by the child's mother (32%) or father (58%).
- In 2003, the rate of children and youth killed by a family member dropped to 4.4 per million children and youth, nearing the record low reached in 2000. The drop in 2003 was driven by a decrease in the number of young male victims.
- A disproportionate number of persons accused of killing their child are young. Accused aged 15-to-24 years accounted for 6 out of 10 parental homicides against infants under one year of age, and 13% of parental homicides against children and youth aged 1-to-17 years.
- Infants (under 1 year of age) consistently account for the highest rates of homicide among all children and youth victims killed by a family member. The risk is higher for baby boys than baby girls.
- Between 1994 and 2003, 4 out of 10 solved homicides against older adults (65+) were committed by a family member, most commonly the victim's adult son.
- Between 1997 and 2003, more than half (54%) of accused in spousal homicides had a previous conviction.

### Chapter 4 – Family homicide-suicides

- Three-quarters (76%) of all homicide-suicides in Canada between 1961 and 2003 involved family members. Over half of these cases were committed by male spouses or ex-spouses and 97% of victims were female spouses (N= 834 female victims). Firearms were the most common weapon used in homicide-suicides regardless of the relationship between the victim and chargeable suspect.
- Women aged 15- to- 44 who were in an intimate relationship had slightly higher homicide-suicide victimization rates (3.5 per million women in a spousal relationship) than women 45 years of age and older (approximately 2.5). Jealousy, arguing and the dissolution of the relationship were found to be prominent characteristics in spousal homicide-suicides.
- Over one quarter (26%) of victims of homicide cleared by suicide between 1961 and 2003 were children and youth under the age of 18 (N=517). The majority of these child and youth victims (N=459 or 89%) were killed by a parent or step-parent. Of these victims killed by a parent 69% were killed by their father, 3% by their step-father and 28% by their mother.
- Boys under 1 and girls aged 1-to-5 years old were at greatest risk of being a homicide-suicide victim at the hands of a parent.
- Older adults are the age group least likely to be victims of a homicide-suicide. Only 137 incidents were reported between 1961 and 2003 and most of these were spousal in nature.

## Chapter 5 – Family violence against children and youth

- According to 122 police services, in 2003, children and youth under the age of 18 accounted for 21% of victims of physical assault and 61% of victims of sexual assault, while representing 21% of the population.
- Parents represented 7 out of 10 family members accused of physical assault and 40% of those accused of sexual assault against children and youth.
- Girls were the victims in 8 out of 10 family-related sexual assaults committed against children and youth.
- Rates of family-related sexual assault were highest for teenage girls, especially for young teenage girls aged 12-to-14. Among boys, rates of family-related sexual assault were highest for those aged 4-to-6.
- Among the approximate 37,300 assaults against children and youth that were reported by the 122 police services participating in the survey, in 2003, 3% (about 900 assaults) were historical assaults, occurring between 1949 and 1999. In cases of sexual assault involving a family member, historical sexual assaults accounted for nearly one in five of all sexual assaults reported to police in 2003 (17%).

## Chapter 6 – Family violence against older adults

- In 2003, older adults (65+) were the least likely age group to be victims of violent crimes reported to 122 police services. Female seniors were victimized at a rate of 119 per 100,000 population and males at a rate of 184.
- Older women are more likely than their male counterparts to be victims of family violence. Close to four out of ten senior female victims were assaulted by a family member, while this was the case for 20% of senior male victims.
- Older victims of family-related assaults most often experienced common assault (55%) followed by uttering threats (19%).
- In 2003, close to eight out of ten family members accused of assaulting an older family member were male with one third being adult male children, and a further 30% were male spouses (either current or previous).
- According to police-reported data, in 2003, over one third of older victims of family-related assaults experienced a minor injury while a further 3% of victims sustained a major physical injury.

## Introduction

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This is the eighth annual *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile* report produced by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics under the Federal Family Violence Initiative. This annual report provides the most current data on the nature and extent of family violence in Canada, as well as trends over time, as part of the ongoing initiative to inform policy makers and the public about family violence issues.

Each year the report has a different focus. This year, the focus is the incidence of stalking and spousal violence reported by both women and men to Statistics Canada's 2004 General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS). In addition, for the first time the report presents an analysis of family-related homicide-suicides that have transpired over the past 40 years. The report also details other family-related homicides which did not involve the suicide of the perpetrator and an analysis of non-lethal family-related violence against children and youth and older adults (65+).

# 1.0 Trends in self-reported spousal violence

by Karen Mihorean

## Introduction

Over the past recent decades Canada has focused efforts on the prevention and reduction of spousal violence. In order to assess whether these efforts have had an impact on the nature and extent of spousal violence or on reporting behaviors of victims of spousal violence, it is necessary to monitor trends over time. To this end, Statistics Canada has made significant strides in advancing the measurement of spousal violence and tracking its occurrence through general population victim surveys and police-reported data.

Until 1993, police-reported statistics were the only national source of information on the nature and extent of spousal violence in Canada. However, it was generally recognized that relying on these data was limited because they only include incidents that come to the attention of the police. And given the 'hidden' nature of these incidents, spousal violence is an offence that is often not reported to the authorities.

In an effort to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the nature, extent and impact of spousal violence against women in Canada, Statistics Canada measured spousal violence against women 16 years of age and older through a national population survey for the first time in 1993. The Violence Against Women Survey was funded by Health Canada through the Federal Family Violence Initiative.

Recognizing the success of this survey and the need to monitor spousal violence against both women and men, questions were added to Statistics Canada's General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization in 1999. Through these questions, Statistics Canada surveyed a random sample of approximately 24,000 Canadian women and men aged 15 years and older, living in the 10 provinces, about violence that their marital or common-law partner (current and previous) may have committed against them in the 5 years preceding the survey.

In addition, to better understand the context in which the violence occurred, a series of questions related to emotional abuse were asked. Finally, to learn more about the impact of spousal violence on women and men and how it may differ, a number of questions on frequency, injuries, reporting to police and other more detailed questions were included.

Results from the 1999 GSS found that 8% of women and 7%<sup>1</sup> of men who were married or living common-law experienced some type of spousal violence in the past 5 years (Pottie Bunge, 2000). Despite similar rates between women and men, the data found that women and men experience very different types of spousal violence and that the impact of the violence is more serious for women than men. For example, women reported more severe types of violence, were more likely to suffer injury, seek medical attention, and fear for their life as a result of the violence than were men (Pottie Bunge, 2000).

Recently, through the 2004 GSS on Victimization, questions related to spousal violence against women and men were repeated. Results of this survey permit the analysis of how spousal violence has changed in nature and extent over the two cycles of the survey from 1999 to 2004 and, for the first time, provide trends on male spousal violence. As will be highlighted in this chapter, the 2004 GSS illustrates that overall spousal violence rates have remained stable, but violence in previous relationships has decreased for both women and men and continues to be more common than in current relationships. In addition, the data continue to show that violence is more prevalent in common-law relationships than in marital unions, and although relatively equal proportions of women and men report some type of spousal violence, women continue to suffer more serious and repeated spousal violence than do men and incur more serious consequences as a result of this violence.

### Defining and measuring spousal violence

To measure spousal violence through the GSS on Victimization a scale of 10 questions was asked of all respondents who were married or living common-law at the time of the survey interview, or who had been married or in a common-law relationship in the 5-year period preceding the survey and who had had contact with their ex-partner during that 5-year period. The scale of questions included both measures of physical and sexual violence as defined by the *Criminal Code* that could be acted upon by the police (see Table 1.1).

1. Differences between figures are statistically significant unless otherwise indicated in the text.

### Coefficient of Variation

The GSS data are based on information collected from a sample of the population and are therefore subject to sampling error. Although the exact sampling error of the estimate cannot be measured from sample results alone, it is possible to estimate a statistical measure of sample error, the standard error. Because of the large variety of estimates that can be produced from a survey, the standard error is usually expressed relative to the estimate to which it pertains. The resulting measure, known as the coefficient of variation (CV) of an estimate, is obtained by dividing the standard error of the estimate by the estimate itself and is usually expressed as a percentage.

This report uses the coefficient of variation (CV) as a measure of the sampling error. For the purposes of this survey, an estimate with a coefficient of variation (CV) of higher than 33.3% is considered too unreliable to be published and the symbol F is printed in the corresponding cell of the data table or figure. When the CV of the estimate is between 16.6% and 33.3%, the corresponding estimate is accompanied by the symbol E in the table or figure. These estimates should be used with caution to support a conclusion.

Using the 2004 GSS sample design and sample size, an estimate of a proportion of the total population, expressed as a percentage, is expected to be within one percentage point of the true proportion 19 times out of 20.

## 1.1 Spousal violence in previous relationships decreasing<sup>2</sup>

Since 1999 there has been no change in the overall level of spousal violence reported by those who were married or living in a common-law relationship during the past 5 years. Overall, 7% of Canadians 15 years of age and older either in a current or previous marital or common-law union in 2004 experienced spousal violence in the past 5 years. This estimate is unchanged from the 7% reported in the 1999 survey.

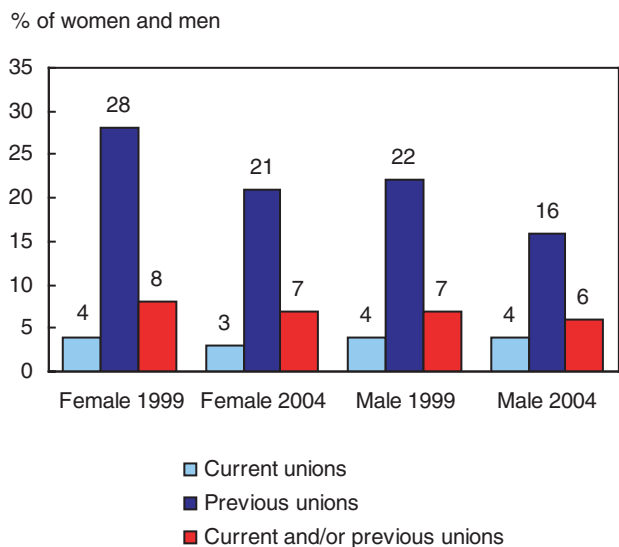
Concerning differences in rates of spousal violence for women and men, it was found that between 1999 and 2004 there was no significant change in the level of spousal violence against men (7% to 6%), while for women there was a slight statistically significant decline from 8% to 7% (Figure 1.1). These figures represent an estimated 653,000 women and 546,000 men that are either physically or sexually victimized by their current or previous intimate partners.

The most pronounced changes in spousal violence between 1999 and 2004 have been within previous relationships. While violence in previous relationships remains significantly higher than that in current unions,

the percentage of persons in these relationships who have experienced violence dropped significantly for both women (from 28% in 1999 to 21% in 2004) and men (from 22% to 16%).<sup>3</sup>

Violence in current unions has remained relatively stable. In 1999 it was found that 4% of both men and women in current marital or common-law relationships experienced either physical or sexual violence from their partner. In 2004 this figure remained virtually unchanged for both men and women<sup>4</sup> (Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1**  
Spousal violence trends, 5 year rates, 1999 and 2004



**Notes:** Includes common-law partners.  
Excludes people who refused to state their marital status.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

## 1.2 Severity of spousal violence

### Women continue to experience more serious violence than men

For both women and men it was more common to report what may be considered less serious forms of violence such

- A person is defined as having a previous relationship if they have been in a marriage or common-law relationship with a person other than their current spouse/partner and they have had contact with that person in the past 5 years. Previous partner violence may have occurred either during their union or following separation, but must have occurred during the 5 year period. See textbox on page 16.
- Includes women and men who had a previous marital or common-law partner in the past 5 years and who had contact with their ex-partner in the past five years.
- There is no statistical difference between the 3% of women and the 4% of men in current relationships that experienced spousal violence in the past 5 years.

**Provincial rates of spousal violence unchanged between 1999 and 2004<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

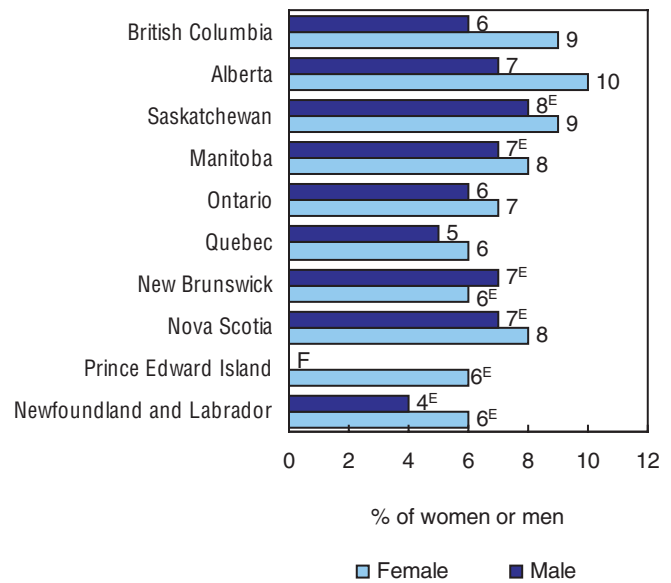
As previously indicated, the overall national levels of spousal violence for both women and men have remained virtually unchanged, with decreases in rates of violence only among previous relationships. With the exception of Quebec, where male spousal violence rates have decreased slightly (7% in 1999 down to 5% in 2004), rates of spousal violence in the provinces have remained relatively stable.

Across provinces, the proportion of women reporting spousal violence in 2004 ranged from 6% to 10%, compared to 4% to 12% reported in 1999, and for men the range was lower at 4% to 8%, compared to 5% to 9% in 1999 (Figure 1.2). Similar to what was found in 1999, women living in Alberta (10%), Saskatchewan (9%) and British Columbia (9%) were the most likely to report spousal violence in 2004. Percentages were lowest for women living in Newfoundland and Labrador (6%), Prince Edward Island (6%) New Brunswick (6%) and Quebec (6%).

Similar to women, men were more likely to report spousal violence in Saskatchewan (8%) and Alberta (7%). Manitoba, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia also had rates at 7%. Men living in Newfoundland and Labrador (4%) and Quebec (5%) were the least likely to report spousal violence.

1. Includes 5-year rates of spousal violence by either a current or previous marital or common-law partner.
2. Numbers for Prince Edward Island were too small to produce statistically reliable estimates of male spousal violence.
3. The difference between rates of spousal violence for women and men are not statistically significant in any of the provinces.

**Figure 1.2**  
**Rates of spousal violence highest in the West, past 5 years, 2004**



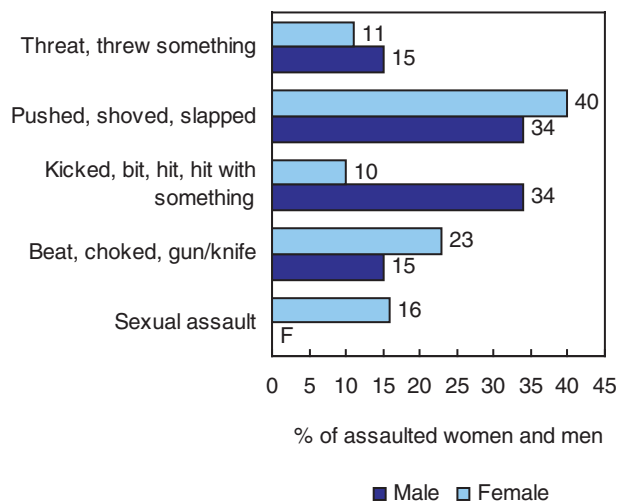
**Notes:** Includes common-law partners.  
Excludes people who refused to state their marital status.  
<sup>E</sup> use with caution  
<sup>F</sup> too unreliable to be published  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

as threats of being hit with something, having something thrown at them, being pushed, grabbed or shoved or being slapped (Table 1.1). Women, however, were more likely to experience more serious forms of violence than were men. For example, when looking at the most serious types of violence reported to the survey, it was found that a larger proportion of women reported being beaten, choked, or threatened with or had a gun or knife used against them by their intimate partner than were men (23% versus 15%) (Figure 1.3). Men, on the other hand, were most likely to self-report that the most serious violence they experienced was being pushed, shoved or slapped (34%), and being kicked, bit, hit or hit with something (34%). Sixteen percent of women who had experienced spousal violence in the past 5 years indicated that the most serious violence experienced was being sexually assaulted by their partner.

Between 1993 and 1999, the GSS data revealed that there had been a slight decrease in the severity of spousal violence experienced by women (Johnson, 2000). This downward trend in the most serious form of violence experienced by women has not continued. For example, in 1999, 43% of women reported that the most serious spousal violence they experienced involved being beaten, choked, threatened with or having a gun or knife used against them or sexually assaulted by their current or

**Figure 1.3**  
**Among victims of spousal violence women experience more serious violence than men, past 5 years, 2004**

Most serious violence experienced



**Notes:** Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous married or common-law partner in the past 5-year period.  
<sup>F</sup> too unreliable to be published  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

previous marital or common-law partner; in 2004 this figure did not change significantly (39%).<sup>5</sup>

Data also suggest that men are experiencing a decline in the severity of spousal violence. For example, despite the fact that similar proportions of male spousal violence victims said that they had been beaten, choked, threatened with or had a gun or knife used against them or sexually assaulted by their current or previous marital or common-law partner in 1999 and 2004 (16% for each year), 34% of men indicated that the most serious spousal violence experienced included being kicked, bit, hit or hit with something in 2004, down from 43% in 1999.

### Spousal violence not likely to be an isolated event

In the majority of violent spousal relationships, the violence is not an isolated incident. Overall, half of those who self-reported spousal violence in a current or previous relationship stated that the violence occurred on more than one occasion (54%). Data also suggest that women are more likely to experience repeated violence than men (57% versus 49%), and that women are much more likely to report that they were the targets of more than ten violent incidents at the hands of their partner<sup>6</sup> (21% versus 11%) (Table 1.4).

Comparing GSS data from 1999 and 2004, it appears that women are less likely to have experienced multiple incidents of violence. In 1999 two thirds of women who were victims of spousal violence said that the violence happened on more than one occasion compared to 57% in 2004. For male victims of spousal violence the figure of multiple incidents remained relatively stable between 1999 and 2004 (54% versus 49%).

### Women more likely to be injured and fear for their life

Given that women are more likely than men to report more serious types of violence and more repeated episodes of violence by a marital or common-law partner, it is not surprising that women are also more likely to suffer physical injury and to fear for their lives as a result of the violence endured at the hands of an intimate partner. According to the 2004 GSS, 4 in 10 (44%) females reported injury

5. In 1993, according to the Violence Against Women Survey, 50% of women who reported spousal violence by either a current or previous marital or common-law partner indicated that the most serious violence they experienced had involved being beaten, choked, threatened with or had a gun/knife used against them or sexually assaulted.
6. Includes both current and previous partners/spouses.

### Comparing the nature of violence in current and previous relationships

Looking at the spousal violence women and men experience in current relationships reveals that while female victims are most likely to say that they were pushed, grabbed or shoved (75%) by their partner, followed by being threatened to be hit (43%), male victims are most likely to experience being slapped (51%) or threatened to be hit (44%) (Table 1.2). While violence was more common in relationships that had ended, similar types of violence were found in these relationships as in current violent relationships, where female victims were most likely to say that they were pushed, grabbed or shoved (85%) and male victims were most likely to state that they were slapped (65%) (Table 1.3).

In current relationships numbers were too small to produce statistically reliable estimates in the case of the most serious forms of violence experienced by women and men to allow comparisons. In the case of previous violent spousal relationships however, women were more likely than men to indicate that they experienced more serious violence. For example, in previous violent spousal relationships women who reported violence were more likely to state that they were beaten than were men (27% versus 15%) and almost three times more likely to have been choked (25% versus 9%). Men were more likely than women to state that they had been slapped (65% versus 42%) and kicked, bit or hit (53% versus 35%).

In current relationships, the vast majority of women and men who self-reported violence indicated that the violence occurred while they were married or living common-law (95% and 92% respectively). However, almost 1 in 10 women living in a current violent relationship experienced

violence by their partner prior to marriage or living common-law (9%).<sup>1</sup> Similarly, 7%<sup>2</sup> of men currently living with a violent partner experienced some type of violence by their partner prior to marriage or living together. The number of women and men who said that the violence occurred during a temporary separation was too small to produce a reliable statistical estimate.

Similar to current violent spousal relationships, the majority of respondents reporting spousal violence in previous relationships indicated that the violence occurred while living in a marital or common-law situation (78%). Virtually no difference was found between the proportion of women and men who had previous violent relationships and who said that the violence happened while they were married or living common-law (77% versus 78%).

However, women who had a previous violent relationship were more likely to say that the violence either happened or continued after they separated from their partner than men (49% versus 35%). More disturbing is the fact that one-third (34%) of women who experienced violence during their relationship said that the violence actually increased in severity or frequency after separation. The number of men who indicated that the violence increased in severity following separation was too small to produce statistically reliable estimates. These data support the notion that spousal violence against women is often an issue of power and control; when the woman leaves the relationship, the man's control over his partner is threatened and as a result the violence escalates against the woman (Daly and Wilson, 1988; Wilson, Johnson and Daly, 1995; Johnson, 1996).

1. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).
2. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

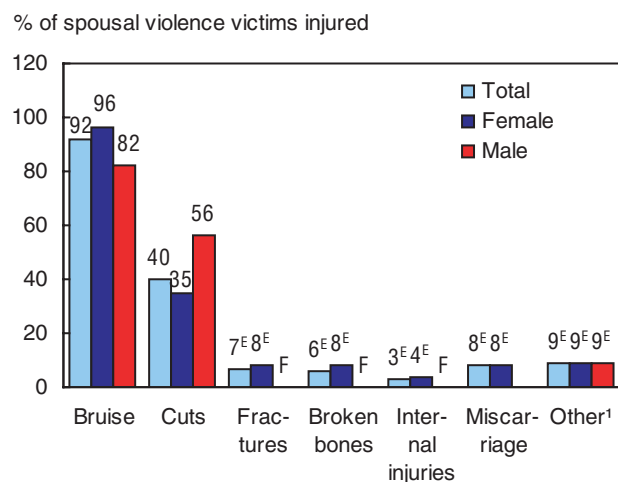


as a result of the violence, while this was the case for 19% of male spousal violence victims. Overall, 13% of female victims indicated that they sought medical attention compared to 2% of male victims of spousal violence who sought medical intervention (Table 1.5).

Among all those who indicated that they were injured, bruises (92%) and cuts (40%) were the most frequently self-reported injuries for both women and men (Figure 1.4). While women were more likely to say that they had been bruised than men (96% versus 82%), men were more likely to have been cut (56% versus 35%). These results are consistent with police-reported data that reveal that women in cases of spousal violence are more likely to rely on weapons than men, while men are more likely to use physical force against their spouse (Brzozowski, 2004). Women were also more likely to report more severe injuries, such as, fractures and broken bones. In addition, 8% of women who were injured also reported that they had suffered a miscarriage as a result of the violence.

The proportion of men who were injured increased between 1999 and 2004 (Table 1.5), while for women the difference was not significant. The percentage of both women and men who sought medical attention remained virtually unchanged.

**Figure 1.4**  
**Bruises most common type of self-reported injury, past 5 years, 2004**



**Notes:** Figures may not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5-year period and who self-reported an injury.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

<sup>F</sup> too unreliable to be published

1. Other includes chipped/lost tooth, dislocations, etc.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

As a measure of the severity of the violence that people experience in intimate relationships, respondents were also asked whether at any point during their relationship they had feared for their life as a result of the violence

and whether they had to take time off from their everyday activities. Results indicate that in about one quarter of violent relationships the violence was serious enough that the victim, at some point, feared for their life. It was also found that female victims of spousal violence were three times more likely than male victims of spousal violence to fear for their life (34% versus 10%) and three times more likely to take time off from their everyday activities because of the violence (29% versus 10%).

### 1.3 Factors that increase the risk of spousal violence

A measure of violence over the previous 12 months was obtained in order to examine the socio-demographic factors associated with violence, such as age, marital status, income, education, family type, length of relationship and place of residence for victims of spousal violence.<sup>7</sup>

Similar to 5-year rates of violence, 12 month rates show that violence is more likely to have occurred in previous relationships than current (4% versus 1%), women and men in current relationships experience a similar incidence of violence (1% versus 2%),<sup>8</sup> and women in previous relationships self-reported higher levels of spousal violence than men (5% and 3%). Overall, 2% of women and men in a current relationship or who have a previous partner experienced some type of spousal violence in the past 12 months. This translates into an estimated 196,000 women and 173,000 men in Canada 15 years of age and older.

The incidence of spousal violence over the past 12 months has remained relatively stable between 1999 and 2004 for women overall (3% to 2%) in both current (2% to 1%) and previous relationships (6% to 5%) (Figure 1.5). Similarly, men's rates of spousal violence over the past 12 month period have remained virtually unchanged between 1999 and 2004.

#### Spousal violence crosses all socio-demographic boundaries

As evidenced in Table 1.6, spousal violence affects all socio-demographic groups. However, there are certain segments of the population that are more vulnerable to spousal violence than others. As indicated below, those who are young, who live in a common-law relationship, who have been in the relationship for three years or less, who are Aboriginal, and whose partner is a frequent heavy drinker are at increased risk of experiencing violence at the hands of their intimate partner.

7. Socio-demographic characteristics, such as, age, marital status, place of residence, education, income family type, and length of relationship change over time, and therefore only 12-month incidence of spousal violence were used to assess risk of spousal violence among different segments of the population.
8. No statistical significance.

### Those who are young are at greatest risk of spousal violence

Age appears to be one of the factors most strongly associated with spousal violence. According to the survey data, it is evident that those individuals under the age of 25 are more likely than those who are older to be victimized by their intimate partner. Rates of spousal violence are lowest among those 45 years of age and older where it was found that only 1% of those in a marital or common-law relationship experienced any type of violence by a partner in the past 12-month period.

Perhaps symptomatic of an aging population, spousal violence rates for those 55 years of age and older yielded reliable estimates in 2004 (1%), while in 1999 estimates of violence for this age group were too small to produce reliable estimates and therefore had to be suppressed. These data support the notion that violence against older individuals is a continuation of spousal violence into old age (Aronson, Thornewell and Williams, 1997).

Partner's age is also a factor associated with risk of spousal violence. Similar to the victim's age, those whose partner is under the age of 25 (5%) are more likely to experience violence than those whose partner is older than 25.

### Rates of spousal violence elevated in common-law unions

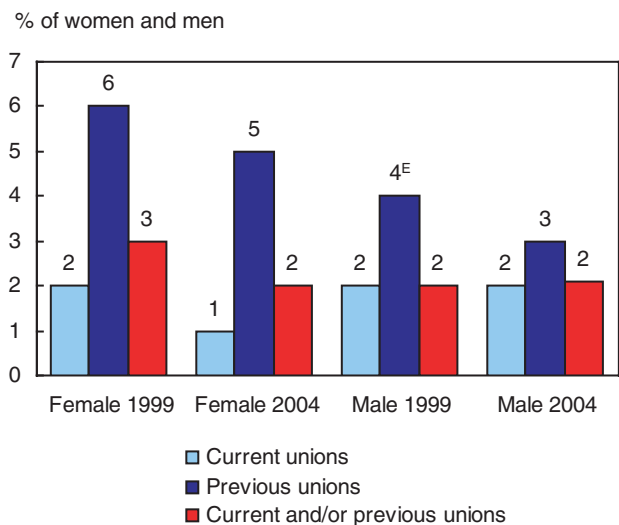
Another factor that is strongly linked to an individual's risk of spousal violence is the type of union. Similar to results from the 1999 GSS, the 2004 GSS found that those living in a common-law relationship are three times more likely to report experiencing violence in the past 12-month period than are those who are in a marital relationship (3% versus 1%). Research has shown that between 1993 and 2002, about 15 common-law partners per million couples were killed, a figure almost four times greater than those living in a marital relationship (Gannon, 2004).

### Length of relationship and risk of violence

The length of time that a couple has been in a marital relationship or cohabitating can influence the level and risk of violence in that relationship. Often connected to the age of the couple where rates of spousal violence are highest among those 15 to 24 years of age, research has found that one-year rates of spousal violence are especially high in relationships where the couple has been married or living common-law for three years or less and this finding is especially prominent in common-law relationships (Johnson, 1996). The 2004 GSS lends support to this assertion. Results found that one-year rates of spousal violence by a current marital or common-law partner were higher in relationships of three years or less (3%), than those that were 4 to 9 years in duration (2%), and three times higher than relationships of 10 or more years (1%).

Similar to one-year rates of spousal violence overall, the duration of the relationship seemed to have a greater impact on common-law relationships than on those who were married to their partner. For example, while the rate of spousal violence for those married for three years or less was 2%,<sup>9</sup> this figure increased to 5% in the case of common-law relationships of three years or less.

**Figure 1.5**  
Incidence of spousal violence over past 12 months highest for previous unions, 1999 and 2004



**Notes:** Includes common-law partners.  
Excludes people who refused to state their marital status.  
<sup>E</sup> use with caution  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

### Income and education had little affect on risk

Victims of spousal violence equally reported all levels of income. Whether one earned a household income of less than \$30,000 or more than \$60,000, rates of spousal violence held constant at 2%. Similarly, level of educational attainment had little impact on the level of violence overall, both with respect to the victims education and the victim's partner's education.

### No urban or rural difference for rates of spousal violence

Whether one lives in an urban or rural area has little impact on their risk of becoming the victim of spousal violence. This holds true for both female and male victims, where no statistical difference was found between those living in an urban area and those living in a rural area.

9. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

### Sexual orientation and risk of spousal violence<sup>1</sup>

While there is little empirical research in the area of spousal violence and same-sex orientation (Brown, 1995), some studies have shown that violence occurs at approximately the same rate in same-sex relationships as it does in heterosexual unions (Kelly and Warshafsky, 1987, Coleman, 1990, and Elliott, 1996). Researchers in this area argue that the issue of same-sex partner violence supports the notion that violence in intimate relationships is not an issue of gender, but an issue of power dynamics within a relationship (Elliott, 1996).

Among the total number of those who reported spousal violence, 1% of victims indicated that they were gay or lesbian. While the overall proportion of those who experienced spousal violence and who indicated that they were gay or lesbian was low, the rate of spousal violence among those who were homosexual was twice the rate of reported violence experienced by those who were heterosexual (15%<sup>2</sup> versus 7%). However, those who indicated that their sexual orientation is gay or lesbian were more likely not to have a current partner (40% versus 16%).<sup>3</sup> As indicated earlier, survey data indicate that rates of spousal violence are highest among those who are in a common-law relationship and those who have a previous partner/spouse.

1. Readers are cautioned that the results of the survey describe rates of violence committed against those who self-identified themselves as gay/lesbian, but does not distinguish the sexual orientation of the perpetrator of the violence.
2. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).
3. To calculate these rates only the populations at risk were considered, including those who had a current spouse/partner or a previous spouse/partner with whom they had contact with in the past 5 years.

### Family type

Research suggests that family composition can impact the level of violence in a household, whereby those living in a step-family are at increased risk of violence (Brzozowski, 2004; Klymchuk et al. 2002; Daly, Singh and Wilson, 1993). While the 2004 GSS found that 12-month incidence of spousal violence among current relationships was 2% in step-families,<sup>10</sup> 1% in intact families,<sup>11</sup> and 1% in relationships with no children, these differences were not statistically significant.

### The use of alcohol elevates risk of spousal violence in a relationship

The role of alcohol in crime has been well documented (Sumner and Parker, 1995) and it is generally agreed that alcohol is not the cause of criminality or violence, but that it does interact with existing factors such as an aggressive personality, a pre-disposition to the use of violence and the circumstances surrounding a given situation. All of these factors, combined in one way or another, can have a negative impact on the outcome of interactions

### Child custody and spousal violence

Often issues of spousal violence are raised as a factor that should be considered when deciding child custody and access arrangements. For the first time, the GSS on Victimization asked in 2004 about child custody and access arrangements of all those who had either a previous marital or common-law partner and who had children currently under the age of 18 with their previous partner. Through these data it can be determined whether there is or has been violence in a relationship that had dissolved and what impact this violence may or may not have had on child custody arrangements.

Overall about one-third (36%) of respondents to the GSS had a previous marital or common-law partner with whom they had children under the age of 18. Of these, just over one quarter (27%) reported some type of physical or sexual violence in their previous marital or common-law relationship during the preceding 5 year period.

According to the survey results, almost two-thirds (64%) of these respondents also stated that their child's or children's principal residence was their home. This figure, however, is not significantly different from the proportion of respondents who had not reported any violence by a previous spouse/partner, where 56% stated that their child's or children's principal residence was their own home. In fact, one-quarter (26%) of respondents who experienced violence from their ex-spouse/partner indicated that their children's principal residence was their abusive spouse or partner's home.

Respondents whose children's principal residence was their own home or a home other than their ex-spouse/common-law partner's were asked how often their ex-spouse/common-law partner saw the child(ren). More respondents who self-reported experiencing spousal violence from their 'ex' than those who had experienced no violence said that their ex-partner had no contact with the children (14%<sup>1</sup> versus 6%<sup>2</sup>).

1. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).
2. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

between individuals and couples. Specifically, the use of alcohol, especially excessive use, can interfere with the interpretation of social cues and the ability to cope with stress, at times resulting in aggressive and violent behavior (Gelles, 1974; Gelles and Straus, 1988). According to the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey, when women who were violently assaulted by their partner were asked how the violence usually began, about 3 in 10 (29%) victims reported that their partner had been drinking (Wolff and Reingold, 1994).

10. Step-family refers to a family in which at least one of the children in the household is from a previous relationship of one of the parents.
11. Intact family refers to a family in which all children in the household are the biological and/or adopted offspring of both members of the couple.

### Aboriginal people suffer high levels of spousal violence<sup>1</sup>

Through the GSS it is possible to look at spousal violence rates among Aboriginal people because of the addition of a question to the survey that was adapted from the Census of the Population that asked respondents to self-identify their race/ethnicity, including whether they were Aboriginal (that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit). Through this question, 2% of respondents aged 15 years of age and older living in the 10 provinces identified themselves as Aboriginal. This figure is consistent with the proportion of Aboriginal people living in the 10 provinces according to the 2001 Census.

Overall, it was found that Aboriginal people were three times more likely to be victims of spousal violence than were those who were non-Aboriginal (21% versus 7%). Unlike non-Aboriginal women and men where the difference in the rate of spousal violence was found to be statistically significant, there was no statistical difference between the rate of spousal violence experienced by Aboriginal women (24%) and Aboriginal men (18%) (Figure 1.6). In addition, findings in the rates of self-reported spousal violence against Aboriginal women and men between 1999 and 2004 have not changed significantly.

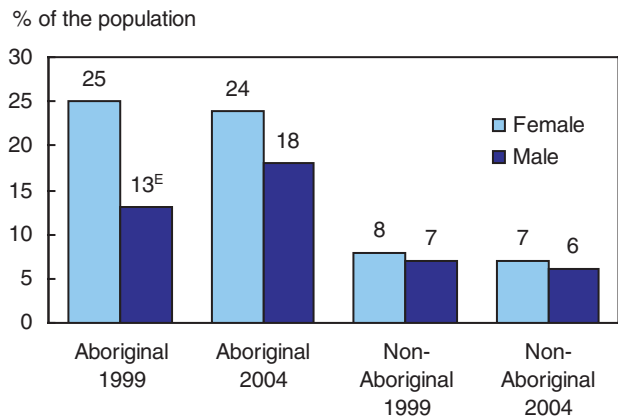
The 1999 GSS found that Aboriginal victims of spousal violence experience more serious forms of violence at the hands of their intimate partners than do non-Aboriginal spousal violence victims (Johnson and Hotton, 2001). The 2004 GSS supports this finding. Overall, Aboriginal victims were more likely than non-Aboriginal spousal violence victims to state that they were either beaten, choked, threatened with or had a gun or knife used against them, or sexually assaulted (41% versus 27%).<sup>2</sup>

When considering only women victims of spousal violence, differences in the level of serious violence emerge more strongly between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. Specifically, while 37% of non-Aboriginal women reported experiencing severe and potentially life threatening violence, including being beaten, choked, threatened with or having a gun or knife used against them or sexually assaulted,<sup>3</sup> this figure increased to 54% for Aboriginal women.<sup>4</sup>

Concerning emotional abuse, results from the 2004 GSS show that a larger proportion of Aboriginal people experienced emotional abuse from either a current or previous marital or common-law partner in the 5-year period relative to non-Aboriginal people (36% versus 17%). This was true in the case of both females and males (37% versus 17% for women and 36% versus 16% for men).

Given that the level of violence experienced by Aboriginal people was generally more serious than that experienced by non-Aboriginal victims of spousal violence, it is not surprising that these two populations reported dissimilar proportions of

**Figure 1.6**  
Self-reported five year rates of spousal violence high among Aboriginal women and men, 1999 and 2004



**Notes:** Includes common-law partners.  
Excludes people who refused to state their marital status.  
<sup>E</sup> use with caution  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

injury (43% Aboriginal versus 31% non-Aboriginal). Also, a greater proportion of Aboriginal victims than non-Aboriginal victims stated that they feared for their life as a result of the violence (33%<sup>5</sup> versus 22%).

Concerning reporting to the police, there was no statistical difference between the likelihood of Aboriginal victims of spousal violence indicating that the police found out about the incident than non-Aboriginal victims (34%<sup>6</sup> versus 27%). And similar to non-Aboriginal victims of spousal violence, the majority of Aboriginal victims who said that the police found out about the violence contacted the police themselves about the violence (68%).

1. Readers are cautioned that the results of the survey describe rates of violence committed against those who self-identified as Aboriginal, but does not distinguish the identity of the perpetrator. In addition this analysis does not include the Northwest Territories, the Yukon or Nunavut where high concentrations of Aboriginal people live.
2. When sexual assault is removed from this analysis significant differences still remain between levels of seriousness of violence between non-Aboriginal victims and Aboriginal victims (18% versus 33%).
3. When sexual assault is removed from this analysis significant differences still remain between levels of seriousness of violence between non-Aboriginal victims and Aboriginal victims (20% versus 42%).
4. Numbers of Aboriginal men who experienced being beaten, choked, threatened with or had a gun or knife used against them, or sexually assaulted were too small to produce reliable estimates.
5. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).
6. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

The 2004 GSS lends support to this assertion. Data reveal that in the past 5 years in over one-third (35%) of violent current or previous relationships, the violent partner had been drinking at the time of the incident. This phenomenon was more common in violent relationships where the victim was female. For example, almost one half (44%) of women with current or previous violent partners said that their partner had been drinking at the time of the violence compared to one quarter of male victims of spousal violence (24%).

Respondents were also asked about their own general drinking patterns and that of their partner. This included questions about the frequency of alcohol consumption in the past month and the frequency in which five or more drinks were consumed at one sitting in a one-month period (used as a measure of being a heavy drinker).

First, looking at 12-month incidence of current partner violence by the number of times the partner consumed alcoholic beverages in a one-month period; it was found that there was little relationship between simple frequency of consuming alcohol and the occurrence of violence (proportions ranged from 1% to 3%).<sup>12</sup> These results are consistent with what was found in the 1999 GSS and were also true in the case of the victim's frequency of drinking (proportions ranged from 1% to 2%).

However, similar to the 1999 GSS, the 2004 GSS found significant differences in 12-month incidence of current partner violence among those whose partner drank heavily; defined as consuming five or more drinks on one occasion, five or more times per month. Specifically, it was found that those whose partner was classified as a heavy drinker experienced a greater likelihood of violence (6%)<sup>13</sup> than those whose partners were either a moderate drinker<sup>14</sup> (2%)<sup>15</sup> or who never drank five or more drinks during one occasion in the past month (1%).

Concerning the extent to which victims drank excessively, numbers were too small to produce reliable estimates of the rate of victims of spousal violence who drank five or more drinks on one occasion five or more times during a one-month period. Proportions of victims who were classified as moderate drinkers (2%) were similar to proportions of victims who never consumed more than five alcoholic drinks at one time (1%).

#### 1.4 The relationship between emotional abuse and violence

Similar to the 1999 GSS, the 2004 GSS asked respondents who were either currently married or in a common-law relationship, or who had been previously married or living common-law and who had had contact with their previous partner in the past 5-years, a series of questions concerning emotional or financial abuse that they may have experienced in the past 5 years (see Table 1.7).

While these questions are not used to determine rates of spousal violence, they are important in that they provide a context in which violence may occur. Research has shown that emotional abuse and/or controlling behaviour are often precursors to physical violence in a relationship (Dobash and Dobash, 1979, 1984; Gelles and Straus, 1988; Wilson, Johnson and Daly, 1995; Pottie Bunge, 2000). Moreover, through case-study interviews with victims of spousal violence it has been found that some women have found emotional abuse to be even more upsetting and disturbing than physical violence because of the lasting emotional scars (Walker, 1979; MacLeod, 1987). In addition, it has been found that emotional abuse is a strong predictor of escalating violence (Johnson, 1996; Pottie Bunge, 2000).

According to the 2004 GSS there has been no significant change since 1999 in the overall level of emotional or financial abuse experienced by Canadians from their current or previous intimate partners. This is true for both women and men. In addition, there has been no significant change in the types of emotional abuse suffered.

Overall, women and men continued to equally report experiences of emotional abuse (18% versus 17%). This was true in the case of most types of emotional abuse with a few exceptions. Women were proportionally more likely than men to state that their partner put them down and called them names to make them feel bad (13% versus 7%). In addition, a larger proportion of women than men indicated that their intimate partners harmed or threatened to harm someone close to them (3% versus 1%), and that their partner prevented them from having access to the family income even when they asked (4% versus 2%).

As suggested by previous research, the 2004 GSS supports the theory that emotional abuse accompanies physical and sexual violence in a relationship - this is true in both current and previous violent relationships for both women and men (Figure 1.7). For both women and men levels of violence in current emotionally abusive relationships remained significantly higher than in current relationships with no emotional abuse in both 1999 and 2004. In the case of previous relationships, while physical violence is still present in about one third of emotionally abusive relationships, levels of violence have decreased in 2004 for both women and men who reported emotional abuse in those relationships – from 46% to 37% for women, and from 39% to 31% for men.

12. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

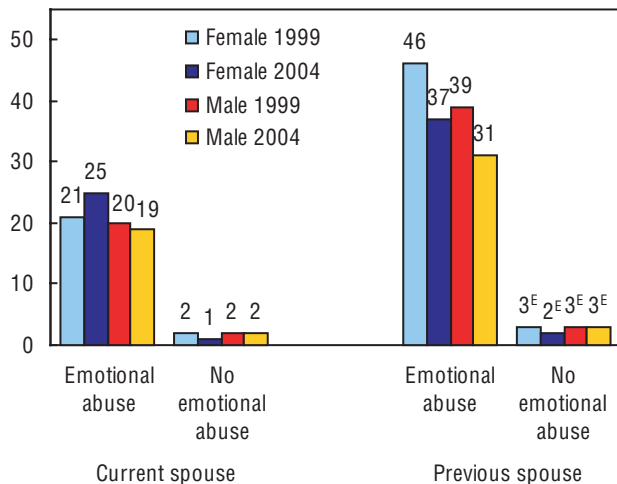
13. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

14. Moderate drinkers are defined as those who drank 5 or more drinks on one occasion one to four times in a one-month period.

15. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

**Figure 1.7**  
**Spousal violence most likely to occur in relationships with emotional abuse, past 5 years 1999 and 2004**

% in a current or previous spousal relationship reporting violence in past 5 years



**Note:** Includes both marital and common-law relationships.  
<sup>E</sup> use with caution  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

### 1.5 Consequences of spousal violence

#### Consequences of spousal violence more serious for women than men

As indicated above, while women and men report similar rates of spousal violence, women are more likely to report serious and repeated violence than men. In addition, women are more likely to be injured and fear for their life as a result of the violence. When asked how the violence affected them overall, only 6% of female victims of spousal violence said not much, while 3 in 10 (30%) male victims gave this as a response. Therefore, it is not surprising that a larger proportion of female spousal violence victims suffered emotional consequences, sought out help from various informal and formal helping agencies or supports, and/or turned to the police and obtained restraining orders against their partner than male spousal violence victims.

#### Victims of spousal violence most often upset, confused and frustrated

In order to assess the extent to which victims of spousal violence are affected emotionally, the GSS asked respondents to report the emotional consequences that they had experienced as a direct result of the violence. The results show that, while victims deal with the violence in different ways, many suffer lasting emotional consequences that change the way they view their partner and the way they view life in general. In addition, results indicate that women are more likely to report all types of emotional consequences than are male victims<sup>16</sup> (Figure 1.8).

#### Stalking and spousal violence linked

One of the impetuses for the introduction of criminal harassment legislation in Canada in 1993 was a number of cases that received significant public attention through the media in which women were stalked and either killed or seriously injured by a previous marital/common-law partner or an ex-boyfriend. Research has shown that not only are most stalking incidents directed at former intimate partners (Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998a), but those who stalk former intimates are more likely to commit violence against their targeted victim (Mullen et al., 2000).

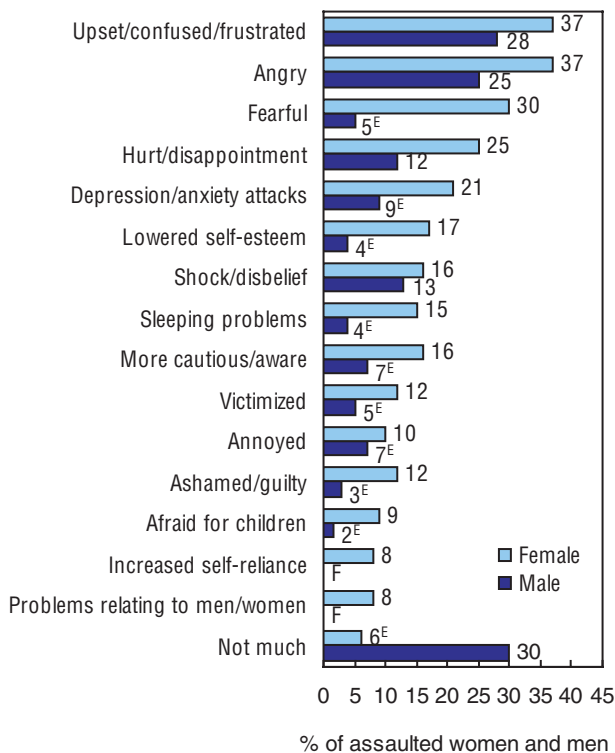
As discussed in Chapter 2 of this report, for the first time the GSS on Victimization asked all respondents about their experiences of being stalked, including repeated and threatening actions (see Textbox *Criminal Harassment as defined by the Criminal Code of Canada*, in Chapter 2). Results from the 2004 GSS support the premise that a relationship between stalking and spousal violence does in fact exist. Specifically, more than one-half (58%)<sup>1</sup> of those who were stalked by a current or previous marital or common-law partner in the past 5 years also self-reported being the victim of spousal violence during the same time period. This was especially true in the case of female victims of stalking, where 61% of those who were stalked by an intimate partner also indicated that they had experienced violence by a current or previous spouse or common-law partner in the past 5 years. For male victims of stalking this figure was also high at 48%.<sup>2</sup>

1. In a small number of cases, victims reported stalking by a current or previous spouse/common-law partner in the past 5 years, but did not report that they had a previous spouse/partner with whom they had contact in the past 5 years. For this analysis these cases have been included in the 'not stated' category of spousal violence.
2. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

The emotions that were most often reported by victims were being upset, confused or frustrated because of the violence (37% of women and 28% of men) or anger (37% of women and 25% of men). Women were also much more likely than men to say that they were fearful in general because of the violence (30% versus 5%), hurt or disappointed (25% versus 12%), or depressed or suffer from anxiety attacks (21% versus 9%). Women were also more likely to experience being more cautious/aware, having sleeping problems, being ashamed or feeling guilty, being afraid for their children, being more self-reliant and having problems relating to members of the opposite sex.

16. The differences between men and women for being shocked and for being annoyed because of the violence are not statistically significant.

**Figure 1.8**  
**Women suffer more emotional consequences, 2004**



**Notes:** Figures may not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5-year period.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

<sup>F</sup> too unreliable to be published

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

## 1.6 Who victims of spousal violence turn to for help

There are a number of people and various types of organizations that victims of spousal violence can now turn to for help. Services for victims of spousal violence have increased considerably over the past two decades as a result of the development and implementation of various pieces of legislation and programs to address the needs of domestic violence by federal, provincial and territorial governments and non-government organizations.

Currently each province and territory has pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies in place to ensure that spousal violence is treated as a criminal matter (*Final Report of the Ad Hoc Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group Reviewing Spousal Abuse Policies and Legislation, 2003*).

Specifically, pro-charging policies require that charges be laid in spousal abuse cases where there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that an offence has been committed, regardless of the victim's wishes. Pro-prosecution policies require that these cases be prosecuted where there is a reasonable expectation or prospect of conviction, based on the evidence, and where it is in the public interest to prosecute. By the early 1990's, many jurisdictions had expanded their spousal abuse policies to address a range of issues including: the type of assistance and support to be provided to victims; the use of peace bonds; the procedure to be followed for the withdrawal or staying of charges; and what to do in the case of recanting or uncooperative victim/ witnesses (*Final Report of the Ad Hoc Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group Reviewing Spousal Abuse Policies and Legislation 2003*).

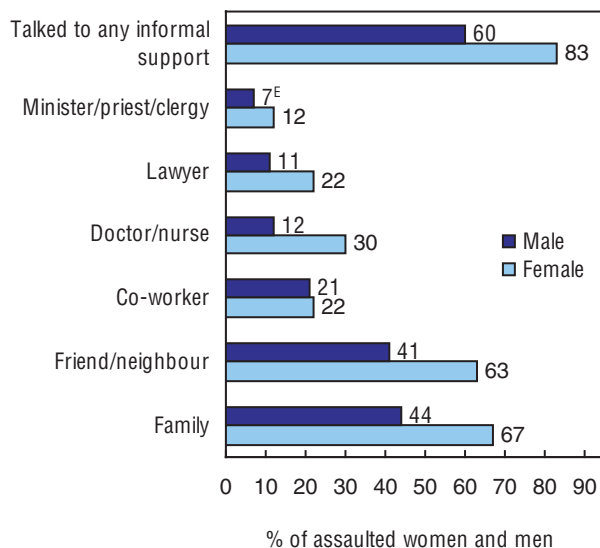
Despite these efforts, disclosing that one is a victim of violence at the hands of his or her spouse or common-law partner can be extremely difficult for many victims. According to the 2004 GSS, almost one-quarter (22%) of spousal violence victims had not told anyone about the violence until they disclosed the violence to an interviewer over the telephone for the current survey. Male victims of spousal violence were much more likely not to have spoken to anyone about the violence than were female victims (35% versus 12%).

### Victims of spousal violence more likely to turn to informal rather than formal supports

Concerning those who had sought informal support, anyone who disclosed at least one act of spousal violence by either a current or previous spouse or common-law partner was asked whether they had ever spoken to a family member, a friend or neighbour, a co-worker, a doctor or nurse, a lawyer or a minister, priest or clergy about the violence. Overall, almost three-quarters (73%) of victims of spousal violence stated that they confided in someone close to them.

It was also found that a larger proportion of female victims of spousal violence turned to informal help sources than male victims (83% versus 60%) (Figure 1.9). This was especially true in the case of talking to a doctor or nurse, where 3 in 10 female victims (30%) sought out medical support compared to about 1 in 10 male victims (12%). In addition, female victims of spousal violence were twice as likely as male victims to speak to a lawyer (22% of women and 11% of men) and more likely to turn to a member of the clergy (12% versus 7%) about the violence. The most frequently relied on source of informal support for both women and men was family (67% female victims and 44% male victims) and friends or neighbours (63% female victims and 41% male victims).

**Figure 1.9**  
**Women more likely to turn to informal supports because of the violence, 2004**



**Notes:** Figures may not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5-year period.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

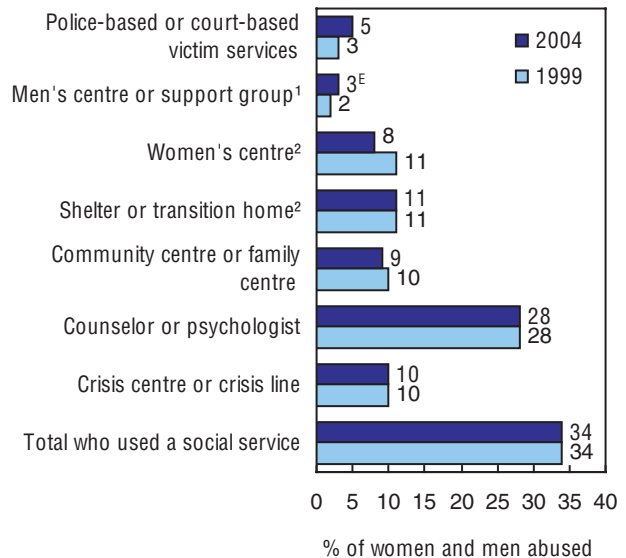
According to the 2004 GSS, the majority of victims of spousal violence do not seek help from formal help agencies or organizations. As indicated above, there are a number of services that victims of domestic violence can now turn to for help (see Figure 1.10). Despite the increase in the availability of these services, the same proportion of spousal violence victims sought assistance from these services according to the 2004 GSS as was found five years earlier through the 1999 survey. As was reported in 1999 about one-third (34%) of victims indicated in the 2004 GSS that they had turned to a formal help agency because of the violence.

Also consistent with results from the 1999 GSS, a larger proportion of female victims of spousal violence turned to a social service for help relative to male victims (47% versus 20%). This was the case for all types of social services available to victims of spousal violence.

The most frequently contacted service used by both female and male victims<sup>17</sup> was a counselor or psychologist (28%), followed by a crisis center or crisis line (10%), a community or family center (9%) and police-based or court-based victim services (5%).<sup>18</sup> Transition homes and women's centres were used by 11% and 8% of women victims, respectively, and 3% of men turned to a men's center or support group for help. Except in the case of police-based and court-based victim services and men's support groups where

there are reported increases in their use, and women's centres where there was a slight decrease, these figures have remained virtually unchanged from what was reported in 1999 (Figure 1.10).

**Figure 1.10**  
**One-third of spousal violence victims contact support services, 1999 and 2004**



**Notes:** Figures may not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5-year period.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

1. Question was asked of only men who had reported spousal violence.

2. Question was asked of only women who had reported spousal violence.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

In order to better understand why victims may choose not to contact a social service to help them cope with the violence, victims were asked to specify reasons for not using these services. Overall, both women and men most often reported that they did not want or need help from a social service agency (48% versus 55%), followed by that the incident was too minor (21% women victims who didn't use a service and 29% of men). Furthermore, similar proportions of women and men did not use a social service because either they did not know such services existed or there were none available (5%<sup>19</sup> of women victims who didn't use a service versus 7%<sup>20</sup> of men).

17. The numbers of male victims of spousal violence who used a helping agency were too small to produce statistically reliable estimates. Analysis therefore includes both male and female victims of spousal violence.

18. Only those victims who turn to the criminal justice system for help would have access to police-based or court-based victim services.

19. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

20. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).



## Shelters and victim services providing assistance to victims of spousal violence

### Residential facilities

Residential facilities such as transition homes, second stage housing and emergency shelters offer victims of spousal violence and their children a safe place to stay and access to a variety of services and resources. According to the 2003/04 Transition Home Survey (THS), there were over 95,000 admissions of women and children to 473 shelters across Canada between April 1, 2003 and March 31, 2004,<sup>1</sup> largely for reasons of abuse (Taylor-Butts, 2005). Most facilities (90%) had policies that did not allow adult males to be admitted into their facility. However, among shelters that did admit male adults, in total, fewer than 50 adult men were admitted for abuse between April 1, 2003 and March 31, 2004, the majority of which were the victims of family violence-related abuse (89%).

On the THS snapshot day, April 14, 2004, there were about 6,000 women (over 3,000) and children (just fewer than 3,000) residing in shelters nation-wide, the majority of whom were fleeing abuse. Specifically, 2,496 (76%) women and 2,501 (88%) children staying in shelters on the snapshot day were there to escape an abusive situation. Of the nearly three-quarters of the women admitted to shelters on April 14, 2004 with parenting responsibilities, 71% brought their children with them.

According to the 2003/04 THS, 86% of the abused women in shelters were fleeing psychological or emotional abuse, 68% physical abuse, 50% threats, 46% financial abuse, 31% harassment and 27% sexual abuse.<sup>2</sup>

### Non-residential facilities

There are also a number of agencies offering non-residential services to victims of domestic violence. According to the 2002/03 Victim Services Survey (VSS), there were 606 victim service agencies across Canada, including system-based, police-based, court-based and community-based agencies, sexual assault centers, criminal injuries compensation programs and other financial benefit programs.

Many of these agencies directed their efforts toward assisting victims of domestic violence, offering information, emotional support, liaison services, court accompaniment and a variety of other services to victims. Specifically, two-thirds of victim services agencies were mandated to serve adult victims of spousal abuse, 63% adult victims of other domestic violence, 79% senior victims of partner abuse and 43% children or youth victims of domestic violence (Kong, 2004).<sup>2</sup>

Through the VSS one-day snapshot (October 22, 2003) it was found that fully one-third of all victims were the victims of spousal violence. The vast majority of these victims (94%) were female. In total, more than 1,400 people assisted had been the victims of sexual assault (196 female, 14 male) or some other violent offence (1,143 female, 64 male) perpetrated by a spouse, ex-spouse or intimate partner (Kong, 2004).

1. The precise reporting period may vary. Shelters were asked to provide information for the 12-month period ending March 31, 2004 or their own 12-month fiscal year.
2. Percentages may not total 100% due to multiple responses.

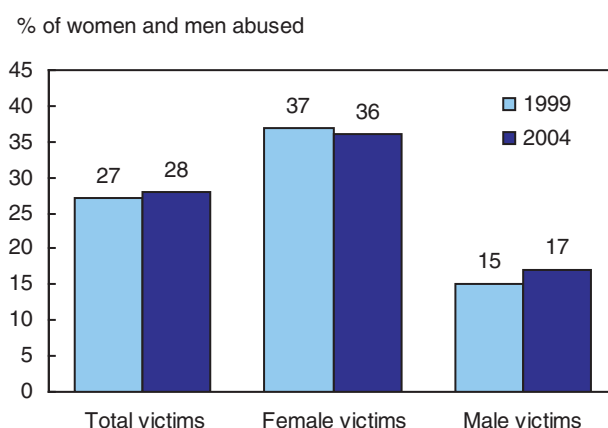
## Men less likely to report spousal violence to the police

As stated earlier, numerous initiatives have been undertaken to better address the needs of victims of spousal violence. Pro-charging and pro-prosecution policies are one example of these efforts with the primary objective being to increase police reporting and prosecution of spousal violence cases by removing the onus from the victim to report and lay charges against their spouse or common-law partner.

Overall, just over one-quarter of respondents (28%) who reported experiencing at least one act of spousal violence from a current or previous spouse or common-law partner in the past five-year period stated that the police had found out about the violence. This figure is virtually unchanged from 1999, when it was found that 27% of victims of spousal violence said that the police had found out about the violence (Figure 1.11).

The proportion of incidents that came to the attention of the police perpetrated against a woman and those committed against a man differed significantly. Specifically, a larger proportion of spousal violence committed against women

**Figure 1.11**  
Rates of reporting spousal violence to police unchanged, 1999 and 2004



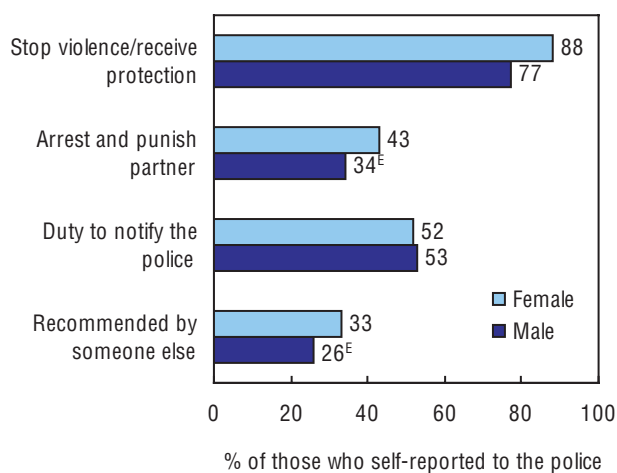
**Note:** Includes those who reported violence by a common-law partner.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

than men were reported to the police (36% versus 17%). While this may be expected given that women were more likely to experience serious, injurious and repeated spousal violence than men, it may also signal reluctance to report among men. In fact, according to the GSS, men are less likely to self-report violence perpetrated against them to police than are women victims of spousal violence (51% versus 75%).

Research suggests that victims of spousal violence may experience multiple incidents of violence prior to contacting the police. Often caught in a cycle of violence whereby following an abusive and violent episode, the couple go through a 'honeymoon' period, the victim may be convinced that it was an isolated incident or that the violence will cease. For the first time, the GSS examined this issue by asking those victims of spousal violence who indicated that the police had found out about the violence, how many violent incidents had they suffered prior to contacting police. Fully 61% of victims of spousal violence experienced more than one violent incident prior to police contact. Furthermore, just less than one half of these victims experienced more than ten incidents of violence at the hands of their partner before the police became aware of the violence.

When victims who reported to the police were asked why they turned to the police, women and men were equally likely to say that they felt that it was their duty to notify the police (52% versus 53%). In addition, both women and men were most likely to say that they reported to police to stop the violence and to receive protection (88% versus 77%). And more than 4 in 10 (43%) women victims who reported to the police and one third (34%) of men said that they contacted the police to have their abusive partner arrested and punished<sup>21,22</sup> (Figure 1.12).

**Figure 1.12**  
**Motivations for reporting to the police, 2004**



**Notes:** Figures may not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5-year period and who self-reported the violence to the police.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

Finally, all victims of spousal violence who chose not to report to the police were asked what the main reason was for not reporting. Overall, more than one-third (36%) of victims said that they did not want anyone to find out about the violence. The second most common reason for not turning to the police was that it was dealt with another way (21%), followed by the fact that the victim felt that the violence was a personal matter that did not concern the police (14%).

**A larger proportion of wife assault cases result in police removing, arresting or laying a charge against the abuser than in cases of husband assault**

There are a number of actions that police can take in the case of spousal violence, including visiting the scene, making a report or conducting an investigation, giving a warning, removing the alleged abuser from the home, or making an arrest or laying a charge. As data from the 2004 GSS reveal, despite mandatory or pro-charging policies in existence across Canada, police use discretion in the actions they take in instances of spousal violence.

As seen in Figure 1.13, the most likely actions victims of spousal violence said that were taken by the police in dealing with cases of domestic violence were to visit the scene (82%) and to make a report or conduct an investigation (76%). About two-thirds (62%) of victims also self-reported that the police gave the abuser a warning, while 44% indicated that the police actually removed the abuser from the home. Slightly more than one-third of victims self-reported that the police made an arrest or laid a charge against their partner.

A larger proportion of female victims' partners were removed by police than was the case for male victims (48% versus 32%). In addition, in a larger proportion of instances of wife assault police made an arrest or laid a charge than in the case of husband assault (41% versus 21%). These findings may be partially explained by the fact that women are more likely to experience serious and repeated violence than their male counterparts. Also as evidenced by police-reported data, a greater proportion of charges are laid in cases of wife assault than husband assault (Brzozowski, 2004).

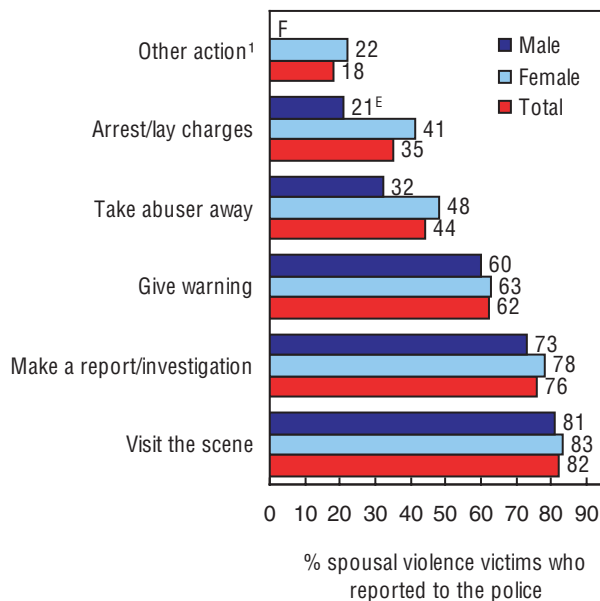
**About one-third of victims of spousal violence sought restraining or protective orders**

Victims of spousal violence can also turn to either criminal courts or civil courts for the additional protection of a restraining or protective order against their abuser. In order to understand the extent to which victims of spousal violence fear for their safety or the safety of someone close to them, for the first time the 2004 GSS collected information on

21. Figures may not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

22. There is no statistical significance between the percent of women and men who reported to the police to have their partner arrested and punished.

**Figure 1.13**  
**Police more likely to make an arrest or lay a charge**  
**in the case of wife assault, 2004**



**Notes:** Figures may not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5-year period and the police found out about the violence.  
<sup>E</sup> use with caution  
<sup>F</sup> too unreliable to be published  
<sup>1</sup> Includes providing information, or taking victim to a social service agency, etc.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

whether those who reported their victimization to the police also applied for a protective or restraining order from their abuser (see Textbox Restraining/Protection orders).

Results indicate that about one-third (32%) of spousal violence victims who reported to the police also had a restraining order or protective order against their abuser and that the majority of these were obtained through a criminal court (73%) as opposed to a civil court (18%).<sup>23,24</sup> The likelihood of seeking a protective order was the same for both those who had experienced violence from a current partner (29%)<sup>25</sup> and those who self-reported spousal violence from an ex-partner (33%).

Conversely, significant differences exist between female and male victims of spousal violence and the use of restraining or protective orders. Specifically, female victims of spousal violence who had reported the violence to the police were much more likely to seek the protection of a restraining or protective order than were their male counterparts (38% versus 15%)<sup>26</sup>.

Finally, respondents were asked whether the restraining or protective order had ever been violated by the abuser. Data revealed that almost one-half (47%) of spousal violence victims who had a protective order stated that the order had been violated. Of these victims, two-thirds (66%) reported the violation to the police. And in slightly more than one-half (53%)<sup>27</sup> of those that were reported to police, the victims indicated that the police laid a charge against the abuser because of the violation.

**Restraining/Protection orders**

All provinces and territories have laws which permit people to apply for restraining orders against violent spouses, family members, or other individuals who intend harm against another. Family violence protection orders are also available in some jurisdictions. Restraining/protection orders are issued by a judge or justice of the peace, either through a criminal or civil court. Anyone who violates a restraining/protection order can face penalties such as a fine or imprisonment.

Restraining orders are intended to protect victims who fear for their safety or the safety of someone known to them. For example, if there is a significant risk of harassment following a spousal separation, a restraining order can be obtained by the estranged husband/wife, which may require the stalker/abuser to maintain a safe distance from the place of work or residence of the applicant and restrict any form of communication with him/her. These orders provide several benefits for victims of stalking/domestic violence which include but are not limited to: sending an immediate message that the abuser's/stalker's behaviour is not acceptable; providing immediate protection for the victim; and/or permitting victims and their children to remain in the home and as a result causing less disruption on the family.

Family violence protection orders, which are available in certain jurisdictions, can be granted by a justice of the peace on an emergency basis in instances where the respondent is not given notice. They are generally available to cohabitants, family members or individuals who are living together in a family, spousal or intimate relationship and to persons who are parents of children, regardless of marital status (in Manitoba such orders are also available to persons subjected to stalking). Protection orders may include several different remedies, such as: granting exclusive occupation of the home to the victim; removing the respondent from the home; issuing a no contact/ no communication order; and/or, ordering that the respondent cannot attend at a specified place; making any other provisions necessary to protect the victims.

**Source:** Final Report of the Ad Hoc Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group Reviewing Spousal Abuse Policies and Legislation.

23. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).  
 24. Figures do not add to 100% because of 'not stated'.  
 25. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).  
 26. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).  
 27. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

Table 1.1

**Trends in the number and percentage of women and men aged 15 years and over who reported violence by a current or previous spouse by type of violence, past 5 years, 1999 and 2004<sup>1,2</sup>**

Type of violence	Victims							
	Female 1999		Female 2004		Male 1999		Male 2004	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total violence by any spouse</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>100</b>
Threatened to hit	449	65	397	61	333	61	291	53
Threw something	301	44	290	44	305	56	265	49
Pushed, grabbed, shoved	561	81	530	81	237	43	262	48
Slapped	276	40	234	36	313	57	309	57
Kicked, bit or hit	227	33	179	27	279	51	216	40
Hit with something	155	22	147	23	143	26	123	23
Beat	172	25	127	19	54	10	44	8
Choked	139	20	126	19	24	4 <sup>E</sup>	25	5 <sup>E</sup>
Used or threatened to use a gun or knife	91	13	74	11	41	7 <sup>E</sup>	48	9 <sup>E</sup>
Sexual assault	138	20	106	16	14	3 <sup>E</sup>	F	F

**Note:** Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

F too unreliable to be published

1. Includes common-law partners.

2. Excludes people who refused to state their marital status.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

Table 1.2

**Number and percentage of women and men aged 15 years and over who reported violence by a current spouse by type of violence, past 5 years, 1999 and 2004<sup>1,2</sup>**

Type of violence	Victims							
	Female 1999		Female 2004		Male 1999		Male 2004	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total violence by current spouse</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>100</b>
Threatened to hit	145	56	105	43	162	53	136	44
Threw something	90	35	76	31	163	54	117	38
Pushed, grabbed, shoved	187	72	183	75	103	34	118	39
Slapped	77	30	61	25	153	51	157	51
Kicked, bit or hit	50	19	35	14 <sup>E</sup>	124	41	88	29
Hit with something	28	11 <sup>E</sup>	24	10 <sup>E</sup>	53	17	42	14 <sup>E</sup>
Beat	33	13 <sup>E</sup>	15	6 <sup>E</sup>	13	4 <sup>E</sup>	F	F
Choked	26	10 <sup>E</sup>	23	9 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	F	F
Used or threatened to use a gun or knife	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F
Sexual assault	21	8 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	F	F	F	F

**Note:** Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

F too unreliable to be published

1. Includes common-law partners.

2. Excludes people who refused to state their marital status.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

Table 1.3

**Number and percentage of women and men aged 15 years and over who reported violence by a previous spouse by type of violence, past 5 years, 1999 and 2004<sup>1,2</sup>**

Type of violence	Victims							
	Female 1999		Female 2004		Male 1999		Male 2004	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total violence by previous spouse</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>100</b>
Threatened to hit	307	70	292	71	173	67	157	63
Threw something	211	48	214	52	147	57	152	61
Pushed, grabbed, shoved	378	87	349	85	135	52	144	58
Slapped	203	46	172	42	162	63	160	65
Kicked, bit or hit	177	41	144	35	161	62	130	53
Hit with something	127	29	123	30	93	36	81	33
Beat	139	32	112	27	41	16	38	15
Choked	114	26	104	25	18	7 <sup>E</sup>	21	8 <sup>E</sup>
Used or threatened to use a gun or knife	86	20	64	16	35	14 <sup>E</sup>	45	18 <sup>E</sup>
Sexual assault	117	27	97	24	12	5 <sup>E</sup>	F	F

**Note:** Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

F too unreliable to be published

1. Includes common-law partners.

2. Excludes people who refused to state their marital status.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

Table 1.4

**Frequency of violent incidents reported by women and men, past 5 years, 1999 and 2004**

Frequency of violence	Victims							
	Female 1999		Female 2004		Male 1999		Male 2004	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total violence by any spouse</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>100</b>
Once	225	33	262	40	227	41	264	48
2-5 times	197	29	197	30	194	35	172	31
6-10 times	72	11	42	6 <sup>E</sup>	35	6 <sup>E</sup>	36	7 <sup>E</sup>
More than 10 times	178	26	135	21	72	13	60	11
Not stated/don't know	17	3 <sup>E</sup>	18	3 <sup>E</sup>	21	4 <sup>E</sup>	14	3 <sup>E</sup>

**Note:** Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

F too unreliable to be published

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

**Table 1.5**  
**Severity of spousal violence by sex of victim, past 5 years, 1999 and 2004**

Type of violence	Victims							
	Female 1999		Female 2004		Male 1999		Male 2004	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total violence by any spouse</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Severity of the violence</b>								
Physical injury	279	40	285	44	72	13	101	19
No physical injury	396	57	368	56	462	84	443	81
Not stated/don't know	15	2 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	15	3	F	F
Received medical attention	104	15	85	13	15	3 <sup>E</sup>	13	2 <sup>E</sup>
Did not receive medical attention	174	25	198	30	57	10	88	16
No physical injury	396	57	368	56	462	84	443	81
Not stated/don't know	16	2 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	15	3 <sup>E</sup>	F	F
Feared for their life	259	38	224	34	41	7 <sup>E</sup>	54	10
Did not fear for their life	414	60	426	65	490	89	489	90
Not stated/don't know	16	2 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	19	3 <sup>E</sup>	F	F

**Note:** Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

F too unreliable to be published

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

**Table 1.6**  
**Spousal violence in the past 12 months by personal characteristics of victims, current partners, 2004**

	Sex of victim					
	Total		Female		Male	
	No. (000s)	% of population	No. (000s)	% of population	No. (000s)	% of population
<b>Total violence by a current partner</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Age group of victim</b>						
Under 25	21	5 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	F	F
25-34	70	3	22	2 <sup>E</sup>	48	4
35-44	65	2	38	2 <sup>E</sup>	26	1 <sup>E</sup>
45-54	35	1 <sup>E</sup>	19	1 <sup>E</sup>	F	F
55 and over	39	1 <sup>E</sup>	15	1 <sup>E</sup>	24	1 <sup>E</sup>
<b>Type of union</b>						
Married	142	1	68	1	74	1
Common-law	88	3	33	3 <sup>E</sup>	55	4
<b>Family type</b>						
Intact	105	1	45	1 <sup>E</sup>	60	2
Step family	17	2 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	F	F
No children	105	1	46	1 <sup>E</sup>	59	2
Other <sup>1</sup>	F	F	F	F	F	F
<b>Household income</b>						
Less than \$30,000	27	2 <sup>E</sup>	17	2 <sup>E</sup>	F	F
\$30,000-\$59,999	76	2	40	2 <sup>E</sup>	37	2 <sup>E</sup>
\$60,000 or more	104	2	33	1 <sup>E</sup>	71	2 <sup>E</sup>
Not stated/don't know	22	1 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	F	F
<b>Education of victim</b>						
Less than high school	28	1 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	F	F
High school diploma	38	2 <sup>E</sup>	20	1 <sup>E</sup>	F	F
Some post secondary <sup>2</sup>	96	2	41	1 <sup>E</sup>	54	2
University degree	62	2	25	1 <sup>E</sup>	37	2 <sup>E</sup>
Not stated/don't know	F	F	F	F	F	F
<b>Education of spouse/partner</b>						
Less than high school	40	1 <sup>E</sup>	26	2 <sup>E</sup>	F	F
High school diploma	53	1 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	40	2 <sup>E</sup>
Some post secondary <sup>2</sup>	79	2	35	2 <sup>E</sup>	44	2 <sup>E</sup>
University degree	49	1 <sup>E</sup>	21	1 <sup>E</sup>	28	2 <sup>E</sup>
Not stated/don't know	F	F	F	F	F	F
<b>Place of residence of victim</b>						
Urban	179	2	72	1	108	2
Rural	50	1 <sup>E</sup>	29	2 <sup>E</sup>	21	1 <sup>E</sup>

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

F too unreliable to be published

1. Other is a lone parent.

2. Some post secondary includes diploma, a certificate from a community college, or a trade/technical school.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

**Table 1.7**  
**Number and percentage of women and men reporting emotional abuse by type of abuse, past 5 years, 1999 and 2004**

Type of emotional abuse	Victims							
	Female 1999		Female 2004		Male 1999		Male 2004	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total population 15 years and older with current or previous spouse</b>	<b>8,356</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9,048</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>8,346</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9,006</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Any emotional/financial abuse</b>	<b>1,552</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1,616</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1,487</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1,492</b>	<b>17</b>
He/she tried to limit contact with family and friends	606	7	588	6	447	5	451	5
He/she put you down or called you names to make you feel bad	1,006	12	1,153	13	554	7	646	7
He/she was jealous and did not want you to talk to other men/women	888	11	829	9	885	11	858	10
He/she harmed, or threatened to harm, someone close to you	320	4	316	3	84	1	120	1
He/she demanded to know who you were with and where you were at all times	750	9	712	8	727	9	732	8
He/she damaged or destroyed your possessions or property	456	5	457	5	198	2	246	3
He/she prevented you from knowing about or having access to the family income even if you asked	322	4	367	4	124	1	186	2

**Note:** Figures may not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.



## 2.0 Stalking - criminal harassment<sup>28,29</sup>

by Kathy AuCoin

### Introduction

Stalking, also referred to as criminal harassment, has been defined in a variety of ways but essentially it consists of repeated conduct that is carried out over a period of time that causes victims to reasonably fear for their safety. Examples of stalking include being followed or spied on, receiving threatening and/or unwanted phone calls, e-mails, letters, and unwanted gifts. These contacts are repeated on numerous occasions and in general serve no legitimate purpose but to cause the recipient to fear for their own safety or for the safety of someone known to them. These stalking behaviors may not result in physical injury, but may be a precursor to subsequent violent acts (Department of Justice Canada, 2004).

Though stalking is not new, it has only relatively recently been recognized as a distinct criminal behaviour. To date, numerous western countries have implemented laws that address the criminalization of stalking behaviours; these include Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands as well as Canada (Blaauw et al., 2002). In Canada, the *Criminal Code* was amended in 1993 to create the new offence of criminal harassment, Section 264 (see *Textbox Criminal harassment as defined by the Criminal Code of Canada*, s. 264) which was a specific response to address the issue of violence against women and more specifically domestic violence. However, the offence applies equally to all victims of criminal harassment. Prior to this amendment, other offences were used to address stalking cases, including; uttering threats, mischief, indecent or harassing phone calls, trespassing at night or breach of recognizance (Department of Justice Canada, 2004).

Since 1993, relevant sections of the Canadian *Criminal Code* have been amended twice. Amendments in 1997 made murder committed in the course of criminally harassing a victim a first degree murder offence, regardless of whether the murder was planned and deliberate. They also made the commission of criminal harassment in the face of a protective court order an aggravating factor for sentencing purposes (see *Textbox Restraining/Protection orders* for definitions, in Chapter 1 “Trends in Self-Reported Spousal Violence”). Finally, in 2002 a further amendment increased the maximum penalty for criminal harassment from five years to ten (Department of Justice Canada, 2004).

Similar to the measurement of crime in general, the prevalence of stalking can be measured either through police or victimization data. Police data reflect only those incidents that come to the attention of police, while victimization data reflect victims’ accounts of incidents whether they have been reported to the police or not. Consequently, prevalence rates from victimization surveys tend to be higher than those that are obtained through police data. To date, Canadian research focusing on stalking/criminal harassment has been limited to studies of police data which describe incident, victim and accused characteristics of police-reported criminal harassment cases (Beattie, 2003, Pottie Bunge, 2002; Hackett, 2000; Kong, 1996). In addition to these, there have been several studies conducted by forensic psychiatrists who have focused on assessing risk and managing stalkers (see Kropp et al., 2002).

In the past decade, four large-scale victimization surveys have been conducted to obtain national population estimates of stalking. These surveys have been carried out in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Canada. For the first time in 2004 Statistics Canada measured stalking through the General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS). The present analysis details the prevalence of stalking in Canada, describing victim characteristics, victim–offender relationships, types of stalking experienced, violent stalking relationships, help-seeking behaviour of stalking victims, emotional consequences of stalking, reasons for reporting or not reporting the stalking to the police, types of charges laid against stalkers, and the use and breach of restraining orders.

### 2.1 Extent and nature of stalking in Canada, past five years

The incidence and prevalence of stalking was measured through the 2004 General Social Survey using a series of questions describing various stalking behaviors (see *Textbox Measuring Stalking Behavior*). A sample of approximately 24,000 men and women, 15 years of age and over were surveyed.

28. Throughout this analysis the term stalking is used to define the action while the term criminal harassment refers to the criminal offence.

29. Differences between figures are statistically significant unless otherwise indicated in the text.

### International research on stalking

To date, several countries have conducted national studies in order to measure the prevalence of stalking within their countries. While results from these studies are presented below, it should be noted that they are not directly comparable due to differences in the way stalking was defined and measured. For example, the studies differed in the way they defined and quantified the level of fear which was a requirement for classification as a stalking victim. They also differed in the number of stalking occurrences that were required to be classified as a stalking victim, and in the age of the population that was being measured. Finally, there are also differences in the reference period – that is whether or not respondents experienced stalking in the past twelve months, since 16 years of age or during their lifetime.

#### England and Wales, 2001 British Crime Survey

- Survey defined stalking as a series, which is two or more incidents that amounted to a course of action causing fear, alarm or distress.
- No degree of fear level had to be specified by the victim.
- Information was collected on stalking experienced in the respondent's lifetime as well as the preceding 12 months.
- Telephone survey of over 22,000 men and women aged 15-to-69 years from England and Wales.

Results from the British Crime Survey indicate that 19% of women and 12% of men were victims of stalking in their lifetime. When considering only the previous 12-month period, prevalence rates fell to 8% for women and 6% for men. A larger proportion of female stalking victims (37%) experienced aggravated stalking (stalking that has a violent component) by an intimate partner (current and ex) relative to male victims (8%). Overall, just under one third of stalking victims reported the incident to the police (31% of female victims and 30% of male victims) (Walby and Allen, 2004).

#### United States, National Violence Against Women Survey, 1996

- Survey defined stalking as a course of conduct directed at a specific person that involves repeated visual or physical proximity, non consensual communication, verbal, written or implied threats or a combination of these acts that would cause fear.
- Two levels of fear were used in the survey to classify respondents as victims of stalking, "high level of fear" or "somewhat frightened or a little frightened" by their assailant's behavior.

- Respondents were asked whether or not they had experienced stalking in their lifetime.
- Surveyed 16,000 men and women over the age of 18.

Results from the survey indicate that 12% of women and 4% of men reported lifetime experiences of stalking behavior, whereby they were somewhat frightened. In addition, 8% of women and 2% of men experienced stalking with a high degree of fear. According to these results, six out of ten female victims (59%) were stalked by either a current or former intimate partner, while this was the case for 30% of male victims. Just under one third of female stalking victims (28%) and 10% of male victims obtained a protective order (Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998).

#### Australia, Australian Women's Safety Survey, 1996

- Respondents did not have to experience fear to have been included in the prevalence rates.
- Incidents where a female was stalked by another female were excluded from the analysis.
- Respondents were asked if they had experienced stalking in either their lifetime and/or during the preceding 12 months.
- A nationally representative sample of 22,463 women and men aged 16-to-59 years were surveyed.

Results from the survey indicate that 16% of Australian women had experienced stalking by a man during their lifetime. The majority of these women had experienced being followed, watched or telephoned repeatedly by their male stalker. Results from the survey found that younger females were more likely to be stalked, with 7% of females aged 18-to-24 years of age reporting being stalked by a male during the previous 12 month period. In contrast to other surveys, the results from the Australian survey found that a larger proportion of females stalked by a male were stalked by a stranger (7 per 100 victims) as opposed to a previous partner (6 per 100) or other male known to the victim (4 per 100) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996).

**Sources:** Australian Bureau of Statistics. 1996. Women's Safety Australia.  
Tjaden, P., and Thoennes, N. 1998. Stalking in America: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.  
Walby, S. and J. Allen. 2004. Domestic Violence, sexual assault and stalking; Findings from the British Crime Survey. Home Office Research Study 276, Development and Statistics Directorate.

### More than one in ten women (15 years of age and over) were victims of stalking in Canada, during the past five years

Results of the 2004 GSS suggest that women are more likely to be victims of stalking than are men. Overall, in Canada, it is estimated that 9% of people, 15 years of age and over, had been stalked in the five years prior to the survey. This represents over 2.3 million Canadians. More than one in ten females (11%) or more than 1.4 million women reported being stalked in the preceding five years in a way that caused them to fear for their safety or the

safety of someone known to them. Just under 900,000 men experienced stalking and the resulting fear during the same time period, which represents 7% of the male population (Table 2.1)

While the majority of female and male stalking victims reported that they had been stalked by only one person, just over one quarter of victims reported that they had been stalked by more than one person in the previous five years (28%). This was the case for a slightly larger proportion of male than female stalking victims (33% versus 25%).

### Stalker typologies

A review of the literature reveals numerous typologies of stalkers, either classified according to the victim-offender relationship or the mental ability/disability of the stalker. Most of these typologies have an underlining theme which is predicated on the emotion of the stalker in relation to their victim.

Most recently, Kropp et al. (2002) formulated a typology that classifies stalkers into four categories based on the relationship of the stalker to his/her victim. They stress that the “ex-intimate” partner constitutes the most common form of stalker and describe this individual as a disgruntled or estranged individual who is unable to let go of their partner once the relationship has ended.

Next within their schema is the “love-obsessional stalker”, defined as a person who has intense emotional feelings for their victim even though he/she has never had an intimate relationship, yet he/she has had some type of a relationship either as an acquaintance or a co-worker with the victim. The third type is the “delusional stalker”, someone who might stalk a celebrity or a person whom they have never had any contact with, but whom the stalker delusionally believes that a relationship with the person does in fact exist. Finally, according to Kropp’s typology, there is the “grudge stalker”, a stalker who knows their victim and for some reason is resentful of this person. In these latter cases the stalking behavior is an act of revenge, but the stalker and victim have never been involved in an intimate relationship with each other, nor does the stalker desire one (Kropp et al. 2002).

**Source:**

Kropp, R., S. Hart and D. Lyon. 2002. “Risk Assessment of Stalkers Criminal Justice and Behavior.” American Association for Correctional Psychology. Vol. 29, No. 5.

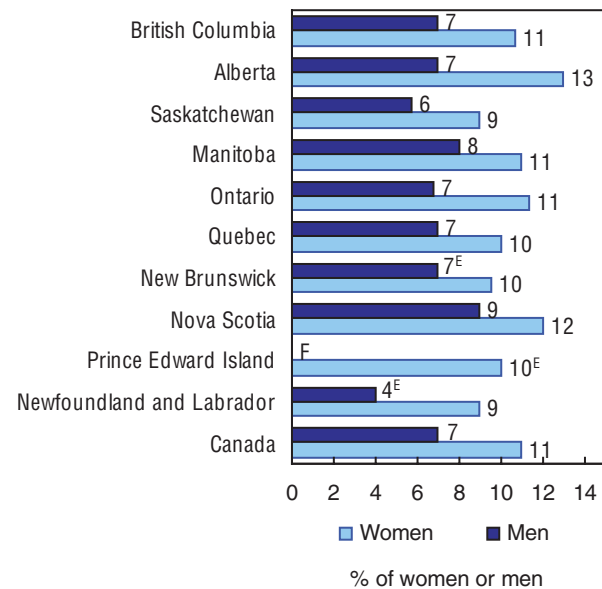
### Obscene phone calls most frequently reported form of stalking for female victims<sup>30</sup>

More than one-half of female stalking victims reported that their stalker phoned them repeatedly or made silent or obscene phone calls (52%), while one third reported being spied on (34%) and/or being intimidated or threatened (34%) (Table 2.2). In contrast, more than half of male stalking victims (56%) reported being intimidated or threatened, while more than one third reported being phoned repeatedly (39%) and one quarter reported being intimidated or threatened by the stalker by hurting their pets or damaging their property (24%). These results are similar to those of the British Crime Survey which found that the most commonly reported stalking behavior experienced by victims were obscene and threatening phone calls (Walby and Allen, 2004).

### Provincial stalking rates<sup>1</sup>

Estimated provincial rates of stalking for women and men ranged from 4% to 13% (Figure 2.1). Women in Alberta (13%), Nova Scotia (12%), Manitoba, Ontario and British Columbia (each reporting 11%) had the highest rates of stalking for women over the past five years. For men, stalking rates were highest in Nova Scotia (9%), Manitoba (8%) and Alberta (7%). Newfoundland and Labrador had the lowest rates of stalking relative to the other provinces for both men (4%) and women (9%) (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1**  
**Women more likely than men to experience stalking, past 5 years, 2004**



<sup>E</sup> use with caution  
<sup>F</sup> too unreliable to be published  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

1. The differences between rates of stalking for women and men are not statistically significant in any of the provinces.

## 2.2 Relationship to stalker

### Most stalking victims know their stalker

Results from the 2004 GSS clearly indicate that stalking victims know their stalkers. Victims most frequently indicated that they were stalked by people classified as friends (23%), current or ex-intimate partners (17%), and persons known by sight only (14%), followed by co-workers, neighbors and other relatives (18%). Overall, less than one quarter of stalking victims were harassed by a stranger (24% of female victims and 22% of male victims). Considering gender differences, female stalking victims were most often harassed by a friend (22%), an intimate

30. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.

### Measuring stalking behaviors

The 2004 GSS measures stalking behavior through the following set of questions;

In the past 5 years, have you been the subject of repeated and unwanted attention that caused you to fear for your safety or the safety of someone known to you? By that I mean has anyone:

1. Phoned you repeatedly or made silent or obscene phone calls?
2. Followed you or spied on you?
3. Waited outside your home?
4. Waited outside your place of work or school or other places you were, when they had no business being there?
5. Sent you unwanted e-mail messages?
6. Sent you unwanted gifts, letters or cards?
7. Persistently asked you for a date and refused to take no for an answer?
8. Tried to communicate with you against your will in any other way?

If the respondent stated that they had experienced at least one of these acts they were then asked "Did you fear for your safety or the safety of someone known to you?" If the respondent stated "yes", they then were considered to be a stalking victim.

In addition to these questions, two additional questions were asked of respondents which did not require them to state that they felt fear because threats were explicit in the questions. Respondents who responded yes to either of these questions were also considered to be victims of stalking.

9. In the past five years, has anyone attempted to intimidate or threaten you by threatening or intimidating someone else?
10. In the past five years, has anyone attempted to intimidate or threaten you by hurting your pet(s) or damaging your property.

partner (either current or ex-partner)<sup>31</sup> (20%). Similarly, male stalking victims were most often stalked by a friend (25%) or a person known by sight only (16%), but were less likely to be stalked by either a current or ex-intimate partner (11%) (Table 2.3).

### Intimate partners

When considering only stalking victims pursued by a current or an ex-intimate partner the data suggest that females are more often stalked by a former partner, either an ex-spouse or an ex-boyfriend (19%).<sup>32</sup> For both females and males, it is an ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend (11% of female stalking victims and 6% of male stalking victims) followed by an ex-spouse (8% of female stalking victims and 4% of male stalking victims) who appear to pose the greatest threat relative to current intimate partners. This is not surprising as research

has consistently shown that the level of violence and conflict between couples is heightened during the initial period of separation following the end of an intimate relationship.

### Majority of stalkers are male

Respondents to the GSS were asked to state the sex of their stalker. Results show that for the majority of victims the stalker was male (80%), regardless of the sex of the victim. The most common gender patterns between the victim and stalker were female – male (53%), followed by male – male (28%). In less than one-in-ten situations both the victim and the stalker were female (9%), and for 5% of cases the stalker was a female pursuing a male.<sup>33</sup>

Results also demonstrate that when the stalker is a female, the target of their behavior, in most cases, is another female, while for male stalkers, the majority of their victims are female. Some researchers have noted that the gender pattern of victim-stalker relationships for men and women may in fact reflect differences in fear levels between the sexes as a result of being stalked by an intimate partner (Kropp et al, 2002). For example, some researchers argue that perhaps more males are stalked by ex-girlfriends or spouses, but this behavior does not cause them to fear for their safety and consequently they are not likely to report it through a victimization survey (Kropp et al., 2002).

### Victims of intimate partner stalking<sup>34</sup> experience multiple forms of stalking

Results from the GSS indicate that the degree of familiarity between the stalker and their victim has an impact on whether or not multiple forms of stalking are employed by the stalker. Female stalking victims who were stalked by an intimate partner were more likely to experience multiple forms of stalking, for example receiving obscene phone calls in addition to being spied on. Two-thirds (67%) of female victims of intimate partner stalking experienced multiple forms of stalking. In addition, just over half (54%) of males stalked by an intimate partner reported that the stalking involved multiple forms.

Furthermore, 65% of male victims of stalking who had been stalked by an "other relative" experienced multiple forms of stalking. In contrast, male and female stalking victims pursued by a stranger were the least likely to experience more than one form of stalking (38% of female victims and 27% of male victims). These results might point to the reality that the more familiar the stalker is with the day-to-day habits of their victims, the more likely the victim will experience more than one form of harassing behaviour.

31. Intimate partner includes spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, ex-boyfriend/girlfriend and may include same sex relationships.

32. Includes a small percentage of victims (3%) who had been stalked by a same-sex partner.

33. Sex of the stalker was unknown for 7% of stalking victims.

34. Intimate partner stalking includes victims stalked by a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend.

### **Criminal Harassment as defined by the *Criminal Code of Canada*, s. 264**

(1) No person shall, without lawful authority and knowing that another person is harassed or reckless as to whether the other person is harassed, engage in conduct referred to in subsection (2) that causes that other person reasonably, in all the circumstances, to fear for their safety or the safety of anyone known to them.

(2) The conduct mentioned in subsection (1) consists of:  
 (a) repeatedly following from place to place the other person or anyone known to them;  
 (b) repeatedly communicating with, either directly or indirectly, the other person or anyone known to them;  
 (c) besetting or watching the dwelling-house, or place where the other person, or anyone known to them, resides, works, carries on business or happens to be; or  
 (d) engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person or any member of their family

(3) Every person who contravenes this section is guilty of  
 (a) an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years; or  
 (b) an offence punishable on summary conviction

(4) Where a person is convicted of an offence under this section, the court imposing the sentence on the person shall consider as an aggravating factor that, at the time of the offence was committed, the person contravened:  
 (a) the terms or conditions of an order made pursuant to section 161 or a recognizance entered into pursuant to section 810, 810.1 or 810.2; or  
 (b) the terms or conditions of any other order or recognizance made or entered into under the common-law or a provision of this or any other Act of Parliament or of a province that is similar in effect to an order or recognizance referred to in paragraph (a)

(5) Where the court is satisfied of the existence of an aggravating factor referred to in subsection (4), but decides not to give effect to it for sentencing purposes, the court shall give reasons for its decision.

## **2.3 Stalking risk factors**

There are several risk factors associated with being a victim of stalking and they include being female, young and Aboriginal. Women are at greater risk of being victims of stalking than men and these results mirror findings from studies in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia as well as police data from Canada. Almost two thirds of respondents who reported experiencing stalking in the preceding five years of the survey were female (62%) – this translates into 11% of the female population, or about 1.4 million women.

A measure of stalking over the previous 12 months was obtained in order to examine the socio-demographic factors associated with stalking, such as age, marital status, income, education and place of residence for victims of stalking.<sup>35</sup> Considering only those victims who had been stalked in the previous 12 months, results indicate that 4% of women or 576,000 females over the age of 15 and 2% of men were stalked (305,000 men 15 years of age and over).

### **Young women at greatest risk of stalking, previous 12 months**

For both males and females the experience of having been stalked, during the previous 12 months was reported more often by younger adults. The highest rates of stalking were reported for young women, where one in ten females aged 15-to-24 self-reported some form of stalking in the previous 12 months that caused them to fear for themselves or someone close to them (Table 2.1). Among males, rates of stalking were also highest for those aged 15-to-17 years (6%)<sup>36</sup> and young males aged 18-to-24 years (4%). Risk of being stalked decreased with age for both men and women. Similarly, the British Crime Survey and the National Violence Against Women Survey found that as age increased the risk of being a victim of stalking decreased (Walby and Allen, 2004, Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998 a).

### **Rates of stalking are two times higher among Aboriginal population, previous 12 months**

Overall, results of the 2004 GSS indicate that Aboriginal people are twice as likely as non-Aboriginal people to have reported experiencing some form of stalking in the previous 12 months which caused them to fear for their life (7%<sup>37</sup> versus 3%) (Table 2.1) (See Textbox Aboriginal people experience elevated levels of stalking). These elevated rates of stalking are not unlike rates of other violent crimes and spousal violence, which are also much higher among Aboriginal populations (See Chapter 1, *Trends in Self-Reported Spousal Violence* for an analysis of Aboriginal rates of spousal violence).

### **Marital status**

Stalking rates based on the previous 12 months indicate that individuals who are either divorced or single experienced a higher incidence of stalking relative to other individuals (7% and 6% respectively). Of note is the high incidence of stalking reported by women who are either divorced or single (10% and 9% respectively). These numbers translate into more than 300,000 divorced or single women who reported being stalked in the past 12 months.

35. Socio-demographic characteristics such as, age, place of residence, education and income change over time, and therefore only the 12-month incidence of stalking was used to assess risk of stalking among different segments of the population.

36. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

37. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

### Income and education had little affect on risk

Victims of stalking equally reported all levels of income. Overall rates of stalking hovered between 3% and 4% whether the individual earned no income or more than \$60,000. Similarly, level of educational attainment had little impact on the level of stalking reported in the preceding 12 months. Rates of stalking for the various levels of educational attainment were reported at a low of 2% of respondents with a high school education and a high of 4% for persons with some post secondary education and less than high school (Table 2.1).

### No urban or rural difference for rates of stalking

Whether one lives in an urban or rural area has little impact on their risk of being a victim of stalking and this holds true for both females and males (Table 2.1).

## 2.4 Stalking characteristics

### Victims stalked by ex-spouses more likely to be harassed for over a year

Stalking by its very nature is a behaviour that is repeated over a period of time. The 2004 GSS asked respondents to describe the duration of the stalking that they had experienced in the previous five years. Overall, one fifth of respondents stated that the stalking behavior carried on for more than one year (21%), while the majority stated that the stalking carried on for less than one year (78%). A larger proportion of female respondents (29%) stated that the duration of the stalking transpired anywhere from one month to six months relative to male victims (21%), while the largest proportion of male respondents (31%) reported that the stalking lasted one week or less.

Research (Purcell et al., 2000) suggests that the duration of the stalking is influenced by the victim-offender relationship, that is stalking of an intimate partner (either current or previous) tends to continue for a longer period of time relative to other types of stalking relationships. Results from the 2004 GSS support this premise; six out of ten (61%) respondents who had been stalked by an ex-spouse reported that the stalking exceeded one year. This was the case for more than one quarter of victims stalked by an ex-boyfriend/ex-girlfriend (26%). In contrast, victims who had been stalked by someone who was a non-intimate<sup>38</sup> were less likely to be harassed for more than one year. Non-intimate stalkers harassed their victims for a relatively shorter period of time which most often fell within a one-to-six month time period. This was the case for 34% of victims stalked by a co-worker, 30% stalked by a friend and 31% stalked by someone known by sight only.

There were two exceptions to this pattern for non-intimate stalkers, that is “neighbour” and “other relatives” who most often stalked their victims for more than one year (43% and 39% respectively). This is most likely a result of either their proximity to their victim and/or detailed knowledge of their victim’s day-to-day habits. On the other hand, stalking victims pursued by a stranger, who are less able to track the victim, tended to be stalked for a short duration of time - most often under a week (41%).

### Threats of violence and physical violence

Stalking behaviors have many different ways of manifesting and escalating. Repeated phone calls, spying and unwanted contact may be followed by more violent actions such as verbal threats and physical violence. Some researchers state that the presence of threats is the first indicator of escalating violence (Rosenfeld & Harmon, 2002).

### Victims stalked by a former intimate partner were more likely to have been threatened with violence and physically grabbed

Palarea et al. (1999) found that stalkers with a previous intimate relationship with the victim were more likely to be violent toward the victim or the victim’s property, and were more likely to make threats than were stalkers without a prior intimate relationship with their victim. Respondents were asked to state that since the stalking behavior had commenced whether or not their stalker had ever physically intimidated them or threatened them with violence. Results from the GSS indicate that of those victims stalked by an ex-spouse, more than half were verbally threatened or physically intimidated (54% of female victims and 48%<sup>39</sup> of male victims pursued by an ex-spouse). One third of female victims pursued by an ex-boyfriend (34%) were also verbally threatened or physically intimidated. A smaller proportion of female stalking victims pursued by a non-intimate stalker reported being threatened or physically intimidated; 33% of female victims pursued by an other relative, 23% of victims pursued by a stalker known by sight only, and over one fifth of victims stalked by a co-worker (22%) or friend (26%).

Among male stalking victims, the largest proportion of victims experiencing threats were those stalked by an “other relative”, where more than half of male victims were verbally threatened or physically intimidated (53%). More than four out of ten male stalking victims pursued by a friend or stalker known by sight only also reported being intimidated (46% and 42% respectively).

38. Non-intimate stalkers include friends, co-workers, neighbors, other relatives, strangers, and persons known by sight only.

39. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

### Aboriginal people experience elevated levels of stalking<sup>1</sup>

#### Rates of stalking during the past five years are two times higher among Aboriginal population

Through the GSS it is possible to look at stalking rates among Aboriginal people due to the inclusion of a question that asked respondents to self-identify their race/ethnicity, including whether they were Aboriginal (that is, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit). Through this question, 2% of all respondents aged 15 years of age and older living in the 10 provinces self-identified as being Aboriginal. This figure is consistent with the proportion of Aboriginal people living in the 10 provinces according to the 2001 Census.

Overall, results of the 2004 GSS indicate that Aboriginal people are twice as likely as non-Aboriginal people to have reported experiencing some form of stalking in the previous five years which caused them to fear for their life (17% versus 9%). Furthermore, the data suggests that more than one in five Aboriginal women experienced stalking (21%); almost double the estimate for non-Aboriginal women (11%). Similarly, estimates for Aboriginal males were almost double those of non-Aboriginal males (12%<sup>2</sup> and 7% respectively) (Table 2.1). These elevated rates of stalking are not unlike rates of other violent crimes and spousal violence, which are also much higher among Aboriginal populations.

#### More than half of female Aboriginal stalking victims fear that their life is in danger

A significantly larger proportion of Aboriginal female stalking victims reported that they felt their life was in danger as a result of the stalking, relative to non-Aboriginal women (49% and 30% respectively).

One out of four Aboriginal stalking victims was stalked by a current or former intimate partner (boyfriend/girlfriend or spouse).

### Aboriginal stalking victims more likely to experience violence

Results from the 2004 GSS indicate that the proportion of Aboriginal stalking victims who reported being grabbed by their stalkers was comparatively larger than that reported by the non-Aboriginal population (26% versus 16%).

Considering that a larger proportion of Aboriginal stalking victims encountered aggressive physical contact with their stalker, it is not surprising to learn that four out of ten Aboriginal victims of stalking contacted the police (41%).

Of those Aboriginal stalking victims who reported to police, the majority believed that the police would stop the stalking from reoccurring (91%), while more than six out of ten believed that reporting the incident was a way to obtain police protection (66%). Similarly, non-Aboriginal stalking victims who reported the stalking to the police also perceived that the police would help to stop the stalking (71%), while less than half thought that the police would provide protection (45%).

A much larger proportion of charges were laid in instances where Aboriginal stalking victims reported to the police relative to non-Aboriginal stalking victims. Of those Aboriginal victims who reported to police, in four out of ten instances (41%) a charge was laid. This was the case in 21% of cases involving non-Aboriginal stalking victims who reported to the police.

1. Readers are cautioned that the results of the survey describe rates of stalking committed against those who self-identified as Aboriginal, but does not distinguish the identity of the perpetrator. In addition this analysis does not include the Northwest Territories, the Yukon or Nunavut in which high concentrations of Aboriginal people live.
2. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

### Former intimate partners more likely to attack/grab their victim

Research suggests that the victim-offender relationship is also a factor that can impact the victim's risk of physical violence. For example, Harmon et al. (1998) analyzed the rates of violence experienced by three groups of stalking victims: those stalked by a stranger; by an acquaintance; and by an intimate partner (either current or ex). Researchers found that there was a significant difference in the rates of violence among these groups, with those stalked by an intimate partner experiencing higher rates of violence. These findings are supported by the results from the GSS.

The 2004 GSS asked respondents to state whether or not they had ever been physically attacked or grabbed by their stalker during the previous five years. Results show that 16% of all stalking victims reported being attacked/grabbed (15% of female victims and 18% of male victims). Similar to threats of violence, victims stalked by a current (36%) or former intimate partner (34%) were more likely

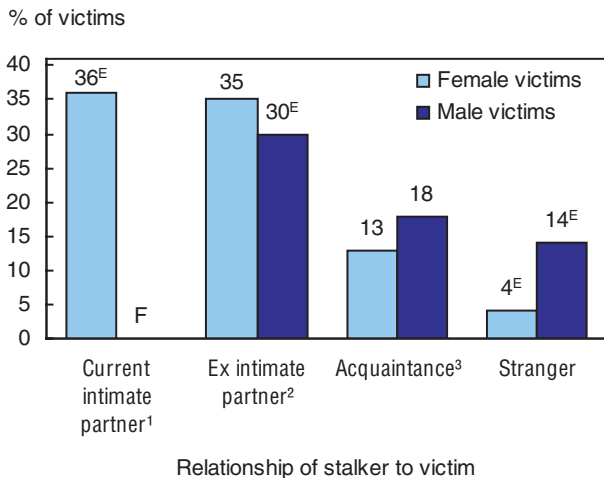
to be grabbed than those stalked by a non-intimate stalker (13%).<sup>40</sup>

Overall, more than one third of female stalking victims pursued by a current intimate partner (36%) or ex-intimate partner (35%) were attacked/grabbed by their stalker. In contrast, a comparatively smaller proportion of female victims stalked by a stranger (4%) or an acquaintance (13%) were attacked/grabbed (Figure 2.2).

Male victims of intimate partner stalking also experienced similar higher proportions of grabbing/attacking with 30% of victims stalked by an ex-intimate partner being attacked. These results support research conducted by Harmon which predicts that a stalker who has had an intimate relationship with his/her victim will be more likely than a non-intimate stalker to use physical violence against their victim.

40. Non-intimate partners include friends, co-workers, neighbors, other relatives, strangers, and persons known by sight only.

**Figure 2.2**  
**Larger proportion of victims stalked by an ex-intimate partner are grabbed, 2004**



<sup>E</sup> use with caution  
<sup>F</sup> too unreliable to be published  
 1. Current intimate partner includes spouse or boy/girlfriend.  
 2. Ex-intimate partner includes ex-spouse or ex-boy/girlfriend.  
 3. Acquaintance includes co-worker, neighbor, friend, other relation and person known by sight only.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

## 2.5 Impact of stalking

Research has shown that stalking victims suffer intense psychological stress that can manifest itself through lack of sleep, paranoia, lack of appetite and severe depression (Mechanic, Uhlmansiek, Weaver & Resick, 2000; Blauuw, 2002). The underlying cause of these disorders is the constant fear experienced by victims. Through the GSS, respondents who self-reported stalking were asked a number of questions to better understand the impact of stalking on victims.

### Almost one-third of stalking victims feared that their life was in danger

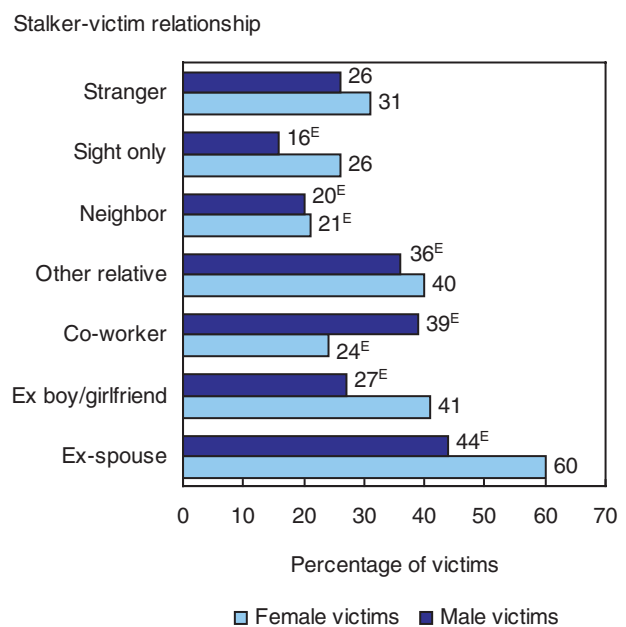
Stalking victims were asked whether or not they feared that their life was in danger from their stalker in order to measure more heightened levels of fear. Overall, close to one third of stalking victims feared for their life, 31% of female and 27% of male victims.

The level of fear experienced by victims was not influenced by the sex of the stalker but by the relationship between the victim and the stalker. For example, a larger proportion of male and female stalking victims pursued by an ex-spouse reported fearing for their life relative to other relationships. Of those victims stalked by an ex-spouse, 60% of female victims and 44% of male victims feared for their life. Furthermore, female stalking victims harassed by either an ex-boyfriend (41%) or an “other relative” also experienced heightened fear (40%). Four out of ten male victims stalked

by a co-worker (39%) reported feeling that their life was in danger (Figure 2.3).

It is interesting to note that comparatively fewer victims stalked by neighbors reported that they feared for their lives (21% of female victims and 20% of male victims) relative to other non-intimate stalking victims. This is noteworthy considering that those stalked by a neighbor reported that they experienced multiple forms of stalking over a relatively longer period of time compared to other non-intimate stalking victims (Figure 2.3).

**Figure 2.3**  
**Victims stalked by an ex-intimate partner fear their life is in danger<sup>1</sup>, 2004**



<sup>E</sup> use with caution  
 1. Insufficient data for analysis of current spouse or current boy/girlfriend.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

### Stalking victims change daily habits to deal with stalking<sup>41</sup>

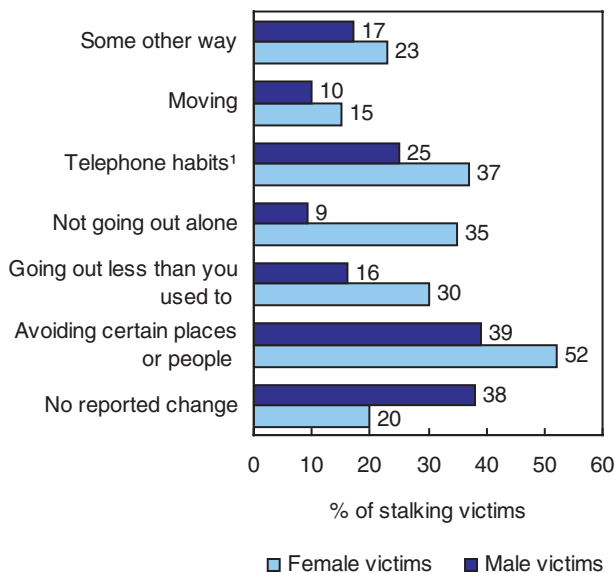
The 2004 GSS asked respondents whether they changed their behaviors as a means of coping with the stress brought about by the stalking and to better protect themselves from their stalker. Stalking victims reported numerous changes in their daily habits and circumstances as a means of controlling their situation. Specifically, one half of female stalking victims (52%) and over one third of male stalking victims (39%) reported that they avoided certain places or people as a direct result of being stalked. Getting an unlisted phone number, call display, call screening or call blocking was the second most reported action employed

41. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.



by both male and female stalking victims (25% and 37% respectively). Over one third of female stalking victims (35%) chose not to go out alone compared to 9% of male stalking victims and, for 15% of female and 10% of male stalking victims, a change of residence was employed as a means of coping with their victimization (Figure 2.4). A larger proportion of women than men reported changing several types of their day-to-day habits as a means of coping with the stalking. Overall, one quarter of stalking victims (27%) reported not changing any of their day-to-day habits in response to the stalking (20% of female victims and 38% of male victims).

**Figure 2.4**  
Stalking victims change their habits as a result of experiencing stalking, 2004



**Notes:** Figures may not add to 100% due to multiple responses.  
1. Getting an unlisted phone number, call display, call screening or call blocking.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

## 2.6 Seeking help

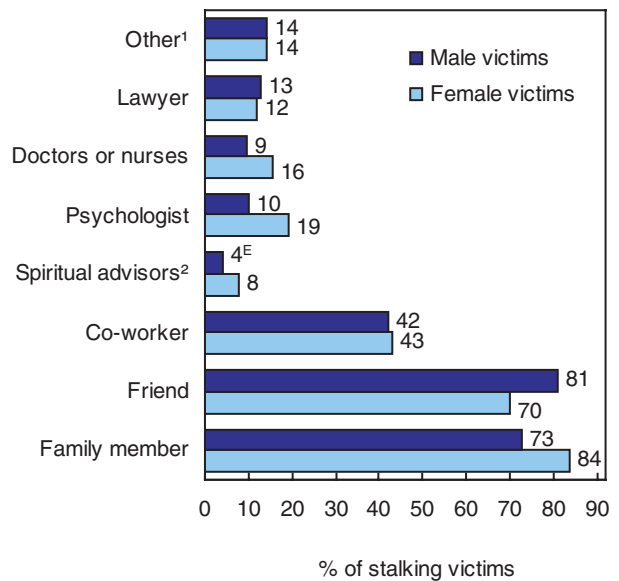
### A larger proportion of female stalking victims seek help from professionals<sup>42</sup>

In addition to changing their own behaviors, stalking victims who had reported experiencing stalking in the past five years also reported turning to others for emotional, legal and/or medical support. Respondents were asked to state what types of help they sought to cope with the stalking. Results indicate that the majority of stalking victims sought help from family (80%) and friends (77%).

In addition to speaking with family and friends about the stalking, many victims turned to formal support services. A larger proportion of female victims relative to their male

counterparts sought out help from support services such as a psychologist (19% of female victims and 10% of male victims) or a doctor/nurse (16% of female victims and 9% of male victims). An equal proportion of male and female stalking victims sought legal advice from a lawyer (13% and 12% respectively) (Figure 2.5).

**Figure 2.5**  
Stalking victims turned to family for help, 2004



<sup>E</sup> use with caution  
1. Other includes employers, police and others.  
2. Minister, priest, clergy or another spiritual advisor.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

### Just over one-third of stalking victims reported stalking to police

Overall, more than one third of respondents reported the stalking to the police (37%). These results mirror those of the British Crime Survey which found that 31% of female and 30% of male stalking victims reported the incident to the police (Walby and Allen, 2004). According to the GSS, the percentage of male and female victims who reported to the police was quite similar (35% and 38% respectively). A higher proportion of victims stalked by an ex-intimate partner (either spouse or girl/boyfriend) reported the stalking to the police relative to other victim-offender relationships. Almost half of victims stalked by an ex-intimate partner (45%) reported to police while only 35% of those stalked by a stranger and 36% pursued by an acquaintance<sup>43</sup> reported the behavior to the police.

<sup>42</sup> Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.  
<sup>43</sup> Acquaintance includes other relative, co-worker, friend, person known by sight only and neighbour.

The most frequently cited reason<sup>44</sup> provided by both male and female stalking victims for reporting to the police was to stop the stalking from continuing (75% females and 67% males), followed by feeling that it was their duty to notify the police (54%). Proportionately more female than male victims reported that they notified the police as a means of receiving protection (54% and 32% respectively) (Table 2.4).

It is not surprising to find that the one factor which influenced police reporting behavior was the level of fear experienced by the victim. Dividing stalking victims into two groups; those that feared that their life was in danger and those that did not, highlights the impact of fear on reporting behavior. More than half of those female stalking victims (56%) who reported that they feared their life was in danger reported the stalking to the police, while only 29% of female victims who did not experience these high levels of fear contacted the police. This pattern was similar for male stalking victims, with 52% of those who feared their life was in danger reporting to the police compared to 29% of victims who did not report these fears but reported the stalking to police.

**Majority of stalking victims did not report incidents to the police<sup>45</sup>**

Overall, six out of ten stalking victims chose not to report the stalking to police and the proportion of male and female stalking victims who chose not to report were similar (64% and 62% respectively). Numerous reasons were cited for not reporting to police; victims stated that the stalking had been dealt with in another way (65%), that it was not important enough (51%), that it was a personal matter (52%), because they felt that the police could do nothing about it (43%), and that they did not want to get involved with the police (40%) (Table 2.5).

**Younger stalking victims chose not to report to police**

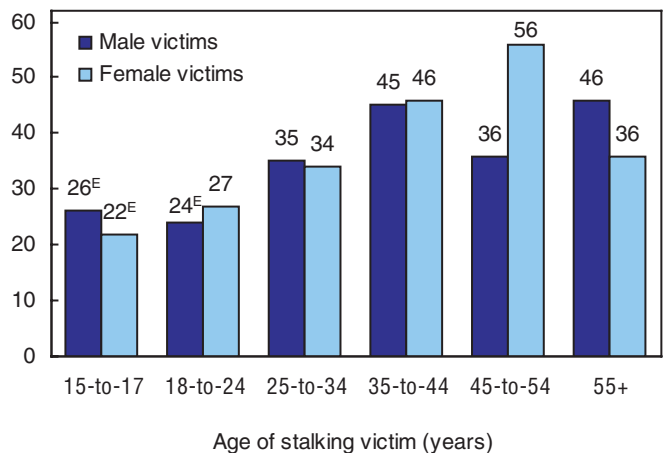
Previous results from the GSS (1999) show that younger victims, in general, are more reluctant to report their victimization to the police. The same pattern was found to be true for young people who are stalked. Overall, less than one quarter of victims aged 15-to-17 years reported the stalking to the police (26% of males and 22% of females). The proportion of stalking victims reporting to the police increased for each age group up until 54 years of age for female victims and up to the age of 44 years for male victims. A smaller proportion of male stalking victims aged 45-to-54 years (36%), relative to female victims of the same age (56%), reported to the police. Just over one third of males in this age group reported to police - while double the proportion of their female counterparts contacted the police (Figure 2.6).

**Charges laid in less than one quarter of stalking incidents reported to police**

Of those stalking victims who reported to the police, charges were laid against the perpetrator in just under one quarter

**Figure 2.6**  
**Less than one quarter of young stalking victims contact the police, 2004**

% of victims who contacted the police



<sup>E</sup> use with caution

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

of these instances (23%) (23% and 21% respectively for female and male victims). Charges that were laid included assault (50%), uttering threats (49%), criminal harassment (46%) and other charges (24%) (Table 2.6).<sup>46</sup>

**Larger proportion of charges laid in incidents involving an ‘other relative’**

Incidents involving an ex-spouse or other relative were more likely to result in charges being laid. Four out of ten police-reported incidents of stalking by an “other relative” resulted in charges being laid (43%). This was the case for over one third of cases involving an ex-spouse (35%) or a close friend (31%) and in one fifth of cases involving an ex-boyfriend or girlfriend (21%)<sup>47</sup> and persons known by sight only (23%). Charges were also laid in 16% of cases reported to police involving victims stalked by a stranger.<sup>48</sup>

Sex of the victim did not have an impact on whether or not charges were laid. Of those incidents reported to police, close to one fifth of incidents involving either a male or female victim resulted in charges being laid (21% and 23% respectively). However, when considering the sex of the stalker results from the GSS indicate that a larger proportion of police reported incidents involving a victim stalked by a male stalker resulted in charges being laid regardless of the sex of the victim. Of those incidents reported to police, one

44. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.

45. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.

46. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple charges being laid against the stalker.

47. Use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%).

48. Insufficient numbers to analyse current spouse/girlfriend or boyfriend, neighbour or co-worker.

quarter (25%) of incidents involving a male stalker resulted in charges being laid compared to 14% of cases involving a female stalker.

### Restraining/Protective orders

Restraining and protective orders are employed as a strategy to attempt to regulate the behaviour of alleged stalkers (see Textbox Restraining/Protective orders in Chapter 1). These orders place restrictions on the alleged stalker preventing him/her from coming into contact with the victim. A breach of these orders results in criminal prosecution.

Overall, 11% of stalking victims sought a protective/restraining order against their stalker. More than one quarter of female victims stalked by an intimate partner (either current or ex) or an “other relative” obtained a restraining order against their stalker. In contrast, male stalking victims pursued by an intimate partner were less likely to seek out a restraining or protective order (90% did not seek out an order). When male victims sought a protective order it was most often against a stalker defined as a friend (11% of males stalked by a friend obtained a protective order).

Just under one half of restraining orders obtained by female stalking victims were against stalkers who were either a current or ex-intimate partner (45%), while an additional 21% were against stalkers who were friends. In contrast, male victims who secured a protective order did so against persons that were friends (31%), relatives other than a spouse (20%), followed by strangers (14%). Of those male victims who obtained a restraining order, 8% did so against a stalker with whom they had had an intimate relationship (either ex or current). Moreover, of those stalking victims who obtained a restraining order, the larger proportion of accused were male (86%).

Restraining orders can be obtained either through a criminal or civil court. According to the 2004 GSS, the majority of stalking victims who sought a restraining order turned to the criminal courts to obtain it. Specifically, two thirds of victims obtained the orders through a criminal court (65%), while 20% of victims obtained it through a civil court. A further 15% of respondents were unsure as to how they obtained the order (Table 2.7).

### Just under one half of restraining orders violated

Of those victims who secured a restraining order against their stalker, just under one half (49%) of these orders had been violated – that is the stalker contacted the victim. Among female victims who sought protection from an intimate partner (either current or ex), 52% of orders were breached, while this was the case for 50% of orders against stalkers who were acquaintances of the female victim. Similarly, half of male victims who obtained a restraining order against an acquaintance had the order breached. Numbers are too small to produce reliable estimates of breach of orders for males stalked by intimate partners.

### Satisfaction with the justice system

Respondents were asked to reflect on the manner in which their stalking case was handled through the justice system and to comment on their level of satisfaction. Overall, more than one third of stalking victims reported using the justice system in some manner (either reporting to the police or obtaining a restraining/protective order) to deal with the stalking. Of those victims who reported using the justice system just under one quarter reported that they were very satisfied (23%), while 27% were somewhat satisfied, 17% were somewhat dissatisfied and a further 26% were very dissatisfied. These patterns of satisfaction were somewhat similar between the sexes.<sup>49</sup>

## 2.7 Summary

Results provided here indicate that a larger proportion of female victims stalked by a former intimate partner experienced physical violence relative to victims pursued by a stranger or acquaintance. These results support previous research (Palarea et al., 1999) which demonstrates that there are higher occurrences of violence among stalkers who are pursuing a former intimate partner. It also supports the notion that given the different victim-offender relationships there appears to be a variation in risk of elevated levels of violence and therefore research and clinical practice should focus on these high risk victim-offender groups.

The data also found that Aboriginal populations are at greater risk of being victims of stalking. Further analysis of these elevated levels of risk would be beneficial. It is not clear whether the variation in stalking experienced by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations is a result of demographic, social and environmental factors that were not examined in the present analysis.

The data clearly indicates that stalking victims suffer emotional distress as a result of the stalking they experienced– they sought out help from friends and family as well as professionals. Stalking victims changed their day-to-day habits as a means of coping with the stalking. More than one third of victims reported the stalking to police. Furthermore, one in ten stalking victims sought out a protective order against the stalker – of which almost one half were violated. This latter finding is important in indicating the potential risk these stalkers pose to their victims – violation of a protective order should be a strong indicator to the justice system that stalkers, regardless of the presence of a protective order, can still pose a high risk. Further analysis to determine the effectiveness of these protective orders is warranted.

49. This analysis does not include 10% of stalking victims who either contacted police or obtained a restraining/protective order but in response to questions regarding their level of satisfaction with the justice system– stated that they did not use the justice system.

**Table 2.1**  
**Personal characteristics of stalking victims, past 12 months and past 5 years, 2004**

Personal characteristics	Victims experiencing stalking in the past 12 months						Victims experiencing stalking in the past 5 years					
	Total		Female		Male		Total		Female		Male	
	No (000s)	% total population	No (000s)	% total population	No (000s)	% total population	No (000s)	% total population	No (000s)	% total population	No (000s)	% total population
<b>Total stalking</b>	<b>881</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2,330</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1,448</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Age group</b>												
15 to 17 years	97	8	58	10	39	6 <sup>E</sup>	199	16	112	19	86	13
18 to 24 years	195	6	140	9	55	4 <sup>E</sup>	534	18	342	23	192	13
25 to 34 years	184	4	132	6	51	2 <sup>E</sup>	518	12	328	15	189	9
35 to 44 years	166	3	102	4	64	2	481	9	295	11	186	7
45 to 54 years	140	3	86	4	54	2 <sup>E</sup>	369	8	239	10	130	5
55 and over	98	1	57	1	41	1 <sup>E</sup>	229	3	131	3	98	3
Aboriginal	45	7 <sup>E</sup>	24	7 <sup>E</sup>	21	7 <sup>E</sup>	107	17	71	21	36	12 <sup>E</sup>
Non-Aboriginal	817	3	542	4	275	2	2,166	9	1,351	11	815	7
Not stated/don't know	19	3 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	F	F	57	8	26	8 <sup>E</sup>	30	9 <sup>E</sup>
<b>Marital status</b>												
Married	240	2	129	2	111	2	...	...	...	...	...	...
Common law	95	4	61	5	34	3 <sup>E</sup>	...	...	...	...	...	...
Divorced	46	7	34	10	11	4 <sup>E</sup>	...	...	...	...	...	...
Separated	56	5	40	5	16	4 <sup>E</sup>	...	...	...	...	...	...
Single	419	6	287	9	132	4 <sup>E</sup>	...	...	...	...	...	...
Widowed	23	2 <sup>E</sup>	22	2 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	...	...	...	...	...	...
Not stated/don't know	F	F	F	F	F	F	...	...	...	...	...	...
<b>Income</b>												
No income	51	3 <sup>E</sup>	38	3 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	...	...	...	...	...	...
Less than \$30,000	390	4	278	5	111	3	...	...	...	...	...	...
\$30,000-\$59,999	185	3	103	4	82	2	...	...	...	...	...	...
\$60,000 or more	94	3	41	5	53	2	...	...	...	...	...	...
Not stated/don't know	162	3	116	4	46	2 <sup>E</sup>	...	...	...	...	...	...
<b>Level of education</b>												
Less than high school	198	4	112	4	86	3	...	...	...	...	...	...
High school	98	2	66	3	32	2 <sup>E</sup>	...	...	...	...	...	...
Some post secondary <sup>1</sup>	416	4	284	5	132	3	...	...	...	...	...	...
University	148	3	104	4	44	2 <sup>E</sup>	...	...	...	...	...	...
Not stated/don't know	21	4 <sup>E</sup>	11	4 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	...	...	...	...	...	...
<b>Place of residence</b>												
Urban	729	4	476	5	253	2	...	...	...	...	...	...
Rural	152	3	100	4	52	2	...	...	...	...	...	...

... not applicable

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

F too unreliable to be published

1. Some post secondary includes diploma, a certificate from a community college, or a trade/technical school.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

**Table 2.2**  
**Number and percentage of stalking victims aged 15 years and over, by stalking type, past 5 years, 2004**

Type of stalking	Sex of victim					
	Total		Female		Male	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total stalking victims</b>	<b>2,330</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,448</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>100</b>
Phoned you repeatedly or made silent or obscene phone calls	1,102	47	757	52	345	39
Followed you or spied on you	651	28	495	34	157	18
Waited outside your home	352	15	267	18	84	10
Waited outside your place of work, school or other	438	19	330	23	108	12
Sent you unwanted e-mail messages	150	6	110	8	39	4 <sup>E</sup>
Sent you unwanted gifts, letters, or cards	207	9	159	11	48	5 <sup>E</sup>
Persistently asked you for a date and refused to take no for an answer	284	12	247	17	36	4 <sup>E</sup>
Tried to communicate with you against your will in any other way	189	8	144	10	45	5 <sup>E</sup>
Try to intimidate or threaten you by threatening or intimidating someone else	995	43	498	34	497	56
Try to intimidate or threaten you by hurting your pets or damaging your property	473	20	260	18	213	24

**Note:** Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

**Table 2.3**  
**Number and percentage of stalking victims aged 15 years and over, by relationship of stalker to victim, past 5 years, 2004**

Relationship of stalker to victim	Sex of victim					
	Total		Female		Male	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total stalking victims</b>	<b>2,330</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,448</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total victims stalked by an intimate partner</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>11</b>
Spouse	19	1 <sup>E</sup>	15	1 <sup>E</sup>	F	F
Ex-spouse	144	6	113	8	31	4 <sup>E</sup>
Boyfriend/girlfriend	21	1 <sup>E</sup>	12	1 <sup>E</sup>	F	F
Ex-boyfriend/girlfriend	214	9	156	11	53	6 <sup>E</sup>
<b>Total victims stalked by acquaintances</b>	<b>1,279</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>62</b>
Neighbour	163	7	93	6	70	8
Friend	542	23	321	22	220	25
Co-worker	140	6	69	5	70	8
Know by sight only	316	14	174	12	141	16
Other relative	119	5	73	5	46	5
<b>Total victims stalked by a stranger</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Not stated/don't know</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>5<sup>E</sup></b>

**Note:** Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

F too unreliable to be published

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

**Table 2.4**  
**Number and percentage of stalking victims who reported to the police and reasons for reporting, past 5 years, 2004**

	Total		Sex of victim			
			Female		Male	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total stalking victims</b>	<b>2,330</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,448</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>100</b>
Reported stalking to the police	857	37	547	38	310	35
Not stated/don't know	17	1 <sup>E</sup>	F	F	F	F
<b>Total - Reasons for reporting to police</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>100</b>
To stop the stalking from continuing	617	72	409	75	207	67
To receive protection	394	46	295	54	99	32
To arrest or punish the offender	359	42	233	43	126	41
Because you felt it was your duty to notify the police	463	54	296	54	167	54
On the recommendation of someone else	199	23	138	25	60	19

**Note:** Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

F too unreliable to be published

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

**Table 2.5**  
**Number and percentage of stalking victims who did not report to the police and reasons for not reporting, past 5 years, 2004**

	Total		Sex of victim			
			Female		Male	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Did not report stalking to police</b>	<b>1,456</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Reasons for not reporting to police</b>						
Because it was dealt another way	944	65	574	64	371	66
Because of fear of the perpetrator	208	14	141	16	67	12
Because police could do nothing about it	628	43	375	42	253	45
Because police wouldn't help	302	21	164	18	137	24
Because victim did not want to get involved with the police	588	40	367	41	222	39
Because victim did not want the perpetrator arrested or jailed	363	25	231	26	132	23
Because the incident was a personal matter	756	52	442	50	314	56
Because the victim did not want anyone to find out	194	13	124	14	70	12
Because of fear of publicity	129	9	95	11	33	6 <sup>E</sup>
Because it was not important enough	747	51	444	50	303	54
Other reason	165	11	101	11	64	11 <sup>E</sup>

**Note:** Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

**Table 2.6**  
**Number and percentage of charges laid as a result of reporting stalking to police, past 5 years, 2004**

	Total		Sex of victim			
			Female		Male	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Charges laid against stalker</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Type of charges laid</b>						
Stalking or criminal harassment	90	46	60	47	30	46
Assault	96	50	64	50	32	49
Uttering threats	95	49	63	49	32	49
Mischief	43	22	49	26	9	14 <sup>E</sup>
Other charges	46	24 <sup>E</sup>	31	24 <sup>E</sup>	15	23 <sup>E</sup>

**Note:** Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

<sup>F</sup> too unreliable to be published

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

**Table 2.7**  
**Number and percentage of stalking victims who sought out a protective order against stalker, past 5 years, 2004**

	Total		Sex of victim			
			Female		Male	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total stalking victims</b>	<b>2,330</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,448</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>882</b>	<b>100</b>
Victims who obtained a restraining or protective order	248	11	169	12	79	9
<b>Total violation of restraining or protective order</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>
Restraining order was violated	120	49	83	49	38	48
Restraining order was not violated	120	49	83	49	37	47
Not stated /don't know	F	F	F	F	F	F
<b>Total restraining/protective order obtained</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>
Family law (civil court)	50	20	42	25	F	F
Criminal justice system (criminal court)	162	65	102	60	60	76
Not stated/don't know	36	15	25	15 <sup>E</sup>	F	F

**Note:** Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>E</sup> use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

<sup>F</sup> too unreliable to be published

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

## 3.0 Family homicides

Using data from the Homicide Survey, the following chapter examines the different circumstances and characteristics of family-related homicides in Canada which occurred between 1994 and 2003. The analysis includes details about spousal homicides, child and youth homicides and family homicides of older persons (65+). This chapter will present data on the characteristics of the accused, the incident and the victim in these homicides.

There were 4,490 solved homicides between 1994 and 2003, of which 1,695 (38%) were family-related.<sup>50</sup> Of these family-related homicides almost half were spousal homicides (47%) while one-quarter were homicides of children and youth (Table 3.1). Overall, six out of ten family-related homicides involved female victims (60%). In contrast, among cases of non-family homicides, the majority of victims were male (79%).

### 3.1 Spousal homicides

by Karen Beattie

#### Prevalence of spousal homicide

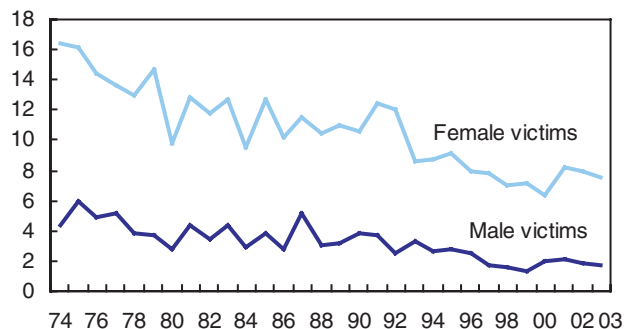
Between 1994 and 2003, spousal homicides represented approximately one-in-five solved homicides in Canada (18%) and almost half of all solved family homicides (47%) (Table 3.1). Spousal homicides include persons in legal marriages, those who are separated or divorced from a union, and those in common-law relationships.

In 2003, there were a total of 78 persons who were killed by their spouse, of which 64 were female victims and 14 were male victims. The number of spousal homicides in 2003 was lower than in 2002 where there were 83 victims, and slightly lower than the previous 10-year average (79) (Table 3.2).

Over the past 30 years, although there were periods of fluctuation, the rate of spousal homicide has declined. In 2003, the rate of spousal homicide was 4.6 (per one million spouses), a decline for the second year in a row (-8%).<sup>51</sup> Since 1974, when data collection began until 2003, the rate of spousal homicide decreased by about half. During this 30-year period, the rate of spousal homicide against females has typically been 4 to 5 times higher than the rate of male spousal homicide. The rate of spousal homicide declined from 16.5 in 1974 to 7.5 in 2003 for female victims and from 4.4 in 1974 to 1.7 in 2003 for male victims (Figure 3.1).

**Figure 3.1**  
Rates of spousal homicide declined by half,  
1974-2003<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Rate per million spouses



1. Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated and divorced spouses, 15 years of age and over, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.
2. Spousal homicides reported by police include a small number of victims who were separated from a common-law relationship. As population estimates are unavailable for this sub-population, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.
3. Six same-sex partners were excluded from the analysis, due to the unavailability of population estimates.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Between 1994 and 2003, spousal homicide rates were lowest in the Atlantic Provinces (3.47 per million spouses). Ontario and Quebec reported comparable rates of spousal homicide during the same time period (4.27 and 4.45 per million spouses respectively). Rates of spousal homicide among the four Western provinces were higher than all other regions, with Saskatchewan reporting the highest rate of spousal homicide among the Western provinces (7.60 per million spouses) (Table 3.3).

50. Solved homicides refer to those where at least one accused has been identified by police.

51. A small number of spousal homicides involving victims who were separated from a common-law relationship have been included in the calculation of the overall spousal homicide rates. However, currently there are no reliable Census estimates for this sub-population and consequently, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.



### Spousal homicide rates in the Territories

Between 1994 and 2003, spousal homicide rates in the Territories were considerably higher than all other regions in Canada (33.38 per million spouses). However, it should be noted that the average number of spousal homicide victims in the Territories used to calculate overall rates was small. For instance, between 1994 and 2003, there was an average of 2 victims of spousal homicides each year in the combined Territories (Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut) (Table 3.3).

### Common-law couples most often victims of spousal homicide

Between 1994 and 2003, spouses in a common-law relationship accounted for a larger proportion of spousal homicide victims than married, separated, and divorced persons. Forty percent of all spousal homicides involved common-law persons, followed by married persons (35%), while just under one-quarter of all spousal homicides involved separated persons (23%) and the remaining 2% were divorced persons.<sup>52</sup>

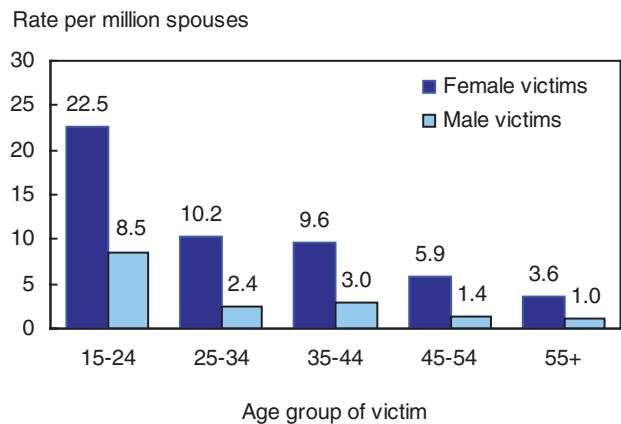
Although legally married persons represented a large proportion of spousal homicide victims (35%), they also represented a large proportion of people in spousal relationships. Three-quarters of all adults, aged 15 years and over in a spousal relationship, in Canada were legally married (75%) during this ten year period according to data from the Census of Population of Canada. In addition, while 13% of Canadians were living in a common-law relationship, they accounted for 40% of all spousal homicide victims.<sup>53</sup>

More than half of all spousal homicides against men were committed by female common-law partners (54%), while 35% of spousal homicides against women were committed by a male common-law partner. On the other hand, a larger proportion of female victims were killed by a separated spouse compared to male victims (26% compared to 11%).<sup>54</sup>

### Young persons at highest risk of spousal homicide

Research has consistently found that the rates of violent victimization, including the rates of spousal victimization, are highest among young people (Pottie Bunge and Locke, 2000). Between 1994 and 2003, homicide data reveal that this is the case for spousal homicide, for both male and female victims (Figure 3.2). During the most recent 10-year period, females aged 15-to-24 had the highest rate of spousal homicide of all female victims, at 22.5 per million female spouses. This was nearly 3 times higher than the overall rate for all female victims of spousal homicide (7.7). While the rate for young male spouses was lower than that of their female counterparts, their risk was more than four times the rate for all male spouses (8.5 for males aged 15-to-24 compared to 2.0 for all male victims).

**Figure 3.2**  
Young persons most at risk of spousal homicide,  
1994-2003<sup>1,2,3</sup>



1. Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated and divorced spouses, 15 years of age and over, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.
  2. Spousal homicides reported by police include a small number of victims who were separated from a common-law relationship. As population estimates are unavailable for this sub-population, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.
  3. Six same-sex partners were excluded from the analysis, due to the unavailability of population estimates.
- Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

It is interesting to note that more than half of all young people aged 15-to-24 who were killed by their spouses were in a common-law relationship (56%), this proportion falls to 38% among older spousal homicide victims (over the age of 25 years). It may be that the high incidence of spousal homicide among common-law couples is driven by the overrepresentation of younger people in common-law relationships, given that young people have traditionally been found to have the highest rates of both victimization and offending.

### Female spouses killed by various means; male spouses killed by stabbing

The methods used to kill spouses differed for male and female victims. For example, between 1994 and 2003, two-thirds of males killed by a spouse were killed by stabbing (66%), followed by shooting (18%). In contrast, the most common method used to kill female spouses was shooting (31%), followed by stabbing (29%), strangulation (20%) and physical force (16%) (Table 3.4).

52. There are 6 same-sex spouses which are included in common-law relationships.
53. Spousal homicide rates by type of spousal relationship were not calculated, as the population estimates by spousal relationship were not fully consistent with relationship types reported by police.
54. Includes persons separated from a legal marriage or from a common-law relationship.

The methods used by spouses also differed depending on the age of the victim. Between 1994 and 2003, young victims aged 15-to-24 were most often killed by stabbing (42%) compared to older age groups such as those aged 35-to-44 (37%) and those over the age of 55 (24%).<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, the use of a firearm to kill a spouse was most common for those over the age of 55 (34%) compared to 27% of spousal homicides against younger victims aged 15-to-24.

### Argument most common motive for spousal homicide

Homicide data over the past 10 years show that homicides committed by spouses most commonly occurred as a result of an argument. Specifically, in homicides where the motive was known by police, escalation of a quarrel or argument was the motive in 41% of all spousal homicides, followed by jealousy (21%) and frustration (19%).<sup>56</sup> Police reported no apparent motive in 5% of all spousal homicides while in 4% of spousal homicides, the motive reported was financial gain.

The motive for spousal homicide tended to differ for male and female victims of spousal homicide. Among homicides that occurred between 1994 and 2003, nearly two-thirds of homicides involving male victims were the result of an escalation of an argument (65%), nearly double that which was reported in homicides of a female spouse (34%). Jealousy was a more common motive in homicides of a female spouse compared to those of a male spouse (25% versus 8%), as was frustration, anger or despair (22% versus 9%).<sup>57</sup>

### Other assaults led to spousal homicides

In many violent spousal relationships, the violence is not an isolated incident. Many spouses experience various forms of spousal violence, and the violence tends to extend over a period of time (see Chapter 1, Trends in Self-Reported Spousal Violence). Among spousal homicides that occurred between 1994 and 2003, more than one-in-five were committed in association with another offence (22%). These precipitating crimes<sup>58</sup> occurred more frequently in spousal homicides involving female victims (23%) compared to male victims (15%).<sup>59</sup>

The majority of precipitating crimes were reported as 'other assaults' (48%), followed by criminal harassment (12%), other violent crimes (11%) and sexual assaults (8%). While a larger proportion of 'other assaults' were committed against men (77%) compared to women (43%), all cases of sexual assault and criminal harassment that lead to homicide were perpetrated against women. More specifically, criminal harassment accounted for 14% of all precipitating crimes that led to the homicide of a female victim, for more detailed information; see Chapter 2, Stalking-Criminal Harassment.

## Characteristics of accused<sup>60</sup>

### A history of family violence was present in 6 out of 10 spousal homicides

Between 1994 and 2003, most spousal homicides involved a reported history of family violence between the victim and accused: 59% of male accused and 69% of female accused.<sup>61</sup> A reported history of family violence was more common for females accused of killing a common-law spouse (77%) compared to male accused (60%) while a reported history of family violence was more common for males accused of killing their separated spouses compared to females (74% versus 69%). Overall, a reported history of family violence was most common for accused in a legal marriage, for both female (54%) and male accused (46%). It is unknown whether previous incidents of family violence were perpetrated by the homicide victim or the accused.

### More than half of accused had criminal record, 1997-2003<sup>62</sup>

In addition to the high prevalence of spousal homicide victims with a history of domestic violence, nearly 53% of all accused in spousal homicides between 1997 and 2003 had a previous conviction.<sup>63</sup> More than half of all accused with a previous conviction had a record for other violent offences (54%), followed by other *Criminal Code* offences and other provincial or federal violations (23%). Property offences accounted for 11% of all previous convictions while drug offences accounted for 4% of all previous convictions. These findings were similar for male and female accused. Two percent of accused had a previous conviction for homicide all of which were male accused.

A smaller proportion of victims of spousal homicide (25%) had a criminal record relative to those accused of spousal

55. Excludes 7 spousal homicides where the cause of death was reported by police as 'unknown'.

56. Excludes 30 spousal homicides where the motive was reported by police as 'unknown'.

57. The motive category of 'frustration, anger and despair' was first available in the Homicide Survey in 1997.

58. Precipitating crimes include sexual assaults, other assaults, kidnapping, abduction, criminal harassment, other violent crime, arson, break and enter, other property crime, other Criminal Code offences, and Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

59. Excludes 60 spousal homicides in which police reported associated or related offences as 'unknown'.

60. Analysis is based on homicides for which there was a single accused. Thus, proportions are derived from a subset of incidents representing 98% of the total number of spousal homicides from 1994 to 2003.

61. Excludes 38 spousal homicides where a history of family violence was reported by police as unknown.

62. Data on prior convictions do not permit a distinction between family-related and non family-related offences.

63. Collection of criminal history information began in 1997. Information on prior convictions was unknown for 33% of accused and 34% of victims of spousal homicides that occurred between 1997 and 2003.

homicide (53%). Between 1997 and 2003, 16% of female victims of spousal homicide and 66% of male victims had a previous conviction. More specifically, of those victims with a previous conviction, a larger proportion of male victims had a previous conviction for a violent offence compared to female victims (57% compared to 24 %).<sup>64</sup> This finding is largely due to the overrepresentation of males in criminal activities.

### One in five accused had a mental disorder

The Homicide Survey began collecting information in 1997 on the presence of a mental or developmental disorder, such as schizophrenia, dementia and developmental delays. This information is determined by police and is not necessarily supported by a medical or a health professional's assessment. Between 1997 and 2003, 15% of the accused in spousal homicides were suspected of having a mental or developmental disorder.<sup>65</sup> A larger proportion of male accused (17%) of spousal homicide were suspected of having a disorder compared to female accused (8%).

### Consumption of alcohol and drug use

As illustrated in Chapter 1, there appears to be a strong relationship between the use of alcohol and spousal violence. According to the Homicide Survey, between 1994 and 2003, alcohol and/or drugs were known to have been consumed by the accused in 60% of spousal homicides.<sup>66</sup> Nearly 22% of accused consumed both alcohol and drugs while 69% consumed alcohol only and 9% were under the influence of a drug when the homicide occurred.

While male accused are more often under the influence of alcohol than female accused in cases of non-lethal spousal violence, a larger proportion of female accused of spousal homicide consumed alcohol and/or drugs compared to males (76% and 55% respectively). In contrast, while 40% of those accused of spousal homicide did not consume any alcohol or drugs, a larger proportion of victims were not under the influence of any substance when the homicide occurred (53%). Of those victims who consumed alcohol and/or drugs, 22% of victims consumed both alcohol and drugs and 68% consumed alcohol only. Moreover, a larger proportion of male victims consumed both alcohol and drugs than female victims (27% versus 18%).<sup>67</sup>

## Characteristics of incident

### First degree murder most common charge for killing female spouse

Charges laid in cases of spousal homicide can be one of three *Criminal Code* offences: first-degree murder, second-degree murder or manslaughter.<sup>68</sup> In the majority of spousal homicides between 1994 and 2003, a spouse was charged with first-degree murder (53%). By comparison, killing a spouse resulted in a second-degree charge 41% of the time,

and the remaining 5% were charged with manslaughter. During this time period an average of 20 homicides per year were cleared by suicide – that is the perpetrator of the homicide killed him/herself, for a more detailed analysis of homicide-suicides please refer to chapter 4, family homicide-suicides.

The type of charge laid differed according to the sex of the victim. Between 1994 and 2003, most homicides against male spouses resulted in a charge of second-degree murder (59%). In cases involving a female victim, it was more likely that killing a spouse resulted in a charge of first-degree murder (60%), twice as high as the proportion of cases involving male victims (30%). A charge of manslaughter was also more common for male victims compared to female victims (12% versus 4%).

Criminal charges for spousal homicides also varied according to the nature of the spousal relationship. Homicides involving ex-spouses were most likely to result in a first-degree murder charge. More than seven in ten (71%) spousal homicides involving a separated spouse and 92% of homicides involving divorced marital partners resulted in a charge of first-degree murder. Homicides involving common-law partners, however, resulted in a first-degree murder charge 36% of the time, and most often resulted in a charge of second-degree murder (55%).<sup>69</sup>

## 3.2 Family homicides against children and youth

by Mia Dauvergne

In 2003, there were 59 homicides committed against children and youth (under the age of 18 years), representing 11% of all homicides in Canada. Slightly more than half of these homicides (53%) were committed by a family member. Thirteen other young victims were killed by a non-family member (such as an acquaintance or a friend), 4 were killed by a stranger and 11 were unsolved.

Over the past 30 years, the rate of children and youth family-related homicides has fluctuated with no discernible pattern. In 2003, the rate of 4.4 children and youth killed (per one million) by a family member dropped, nearing the record low reached in 2000 of 4.3 per million children and youth. This drop was driven by a decrease in the number

64. Data on the types of prior conviction are based on the most serious conviction as reported by police.

65. Excludes 385 spousal homicides where the presence of a mental or developmental disorder was reported by police as 'unknown'.

66. Excludes 186 homicides where the consumption of alcohol and /or drugs was reported by police as unknown.

67. Excludes 161 homicides where the consumption of alcohol and/or drugs was reported by police as unknown.

68. Charge data represent charges laid or recommended by police at the time of the initial investigation and do not reflect revisions following court appearances or convictions.

69. Homicides involving common-law spouses also include 6 same-sex homicides.

of young male victims. There were 13 male children and youth killed by a family member in 2003, the lowest number since recording began in 1974.<sup>70</sup>

It is important to note that the incidence of child and youth homicide may be under-counted. This is because some deaths that are actually due to intentional injury or neglect may be misclassified as accidental or a natural or undetermined cause.

**Parents responsible for the vast majority of family-related homicides against children and youth<sup>71</sup>**

Historical data consistently show that parents are responsible for the vast majority of family-related homicides against young people. Since 1994, 90% of all familial killings committed against victims aged 0-to-17 years were committed by a parent.

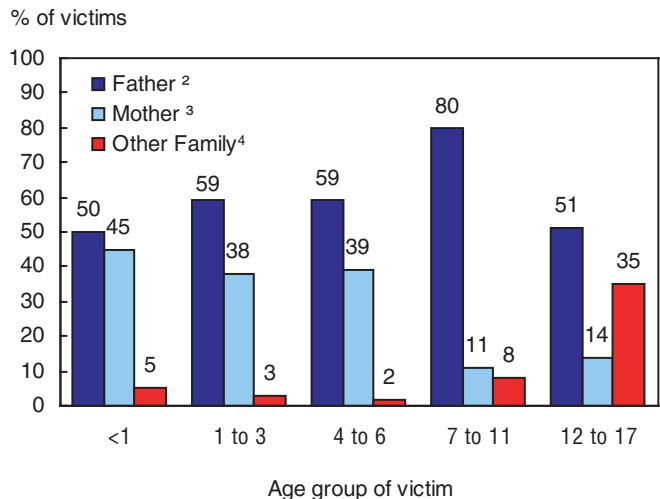
As indicated in Chapter 4 Family Homicide-Suicides, fathers<sup>72</sup> are more likely than mothers<sup>73</sup> to kill their own children. Between 1994 and 2003, fathers committed 58% of the family-related homicides of children and youth. Mothers committed about one-third (32%) and other family members were responsible for the remaining 9%. This pattern is fairly consistent across all age categories of victims, although the difference is less exaggerated when the victim is an infant (Figure 3.3). It is unusual for another family member (such as a sibling or an extended family member) to kill a child; however, the proportion of such killings increases substantially during a person’s adolescent years.

**Young parents over-represented as accused<sup>74</sup>**

A disproportionate number of accused parents are young. Despite representing only 3% of parents,<sup>75</sup> accused aged 15-to-24 years accounted for 6 out of 10 parental homicides (59%) against infants under one year of age, and 13% of parental homicides against children and youth aged 1-to-17 years between 1994 and 2003. Lack of parenting skills, financial insecurity and lower levels of educational achievement may contribute to younger parents’ inability to adequately cope with the pressures of parenting. This finding is consistent with the higher crime rates for young adults in general.

In recent years, the proportion of step-parents named as the accused person in familial homicides against children and youth has increased, largely driven by an increase in the number of step-fathers. Over the past ten years, step-fathers and step-mothers represented 12% of accused persons, compared to 4% during the previous ten-year period (1984 to 1993) and 5% for the 10-year period preceding that (1974 to 1983).<sup>76</sup> This increase may be partly due to an increase in the number of blended families throughout recent decades. Data from the 2001 GSS show a recent increase in the number of step families, 40% of which are blended (Statistics Canada, July 2002b).

**Figure 3.3**  
**Fathers responsible for the majority of family-related homicides involving child and youth victims, 1994-2003<sup>1</sup>**



**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.  
 1. The analysis of accused characteristics is based upon a subset consisting of those victims who were killed by one person, representing 94% of the total number of family-related homicides against children and young victims from 1994 to 2003.  
 2. Includes biological, adoptive, foster and step-fathers.  
 3. Includes biological, adoptive, foster and step-mothers.  
 4. Includes siblings, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, cousins and any other family member related by blood, marriage or adoption.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

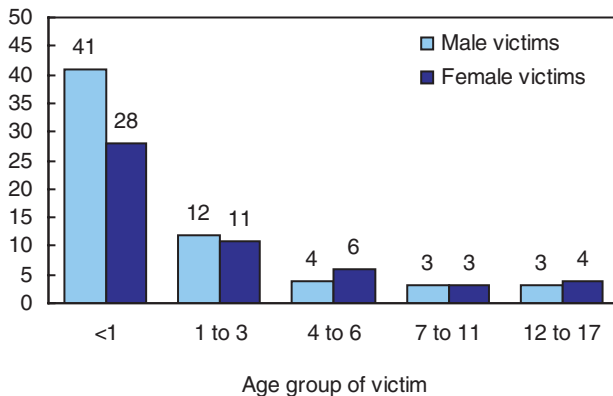
**Homicide rates highest among infants**

During the most recent 10-year period, more than half (56%) of all children and youth who were killed by a family member were under 4 years of age. In fact, unlike homicide-suicides where children aged 1 to 2 have the highest rates, infants (under 1 year of age) consistently account for the highest rates of homicide among all children and youth victims killed by a family member. Between 1994 and 2003, the average homicide rate was 36 per million infants. The risk of homicide was higher for baby boys (41 per million) than for baby girls (28 per million) (Figure 3.4).

70. Incidents of manslaughter and infanticide are not recorded on the Homicide database prior to 1974.  
 71. The analysis is based upon a subset consisting of those victims who were killed by one person, representing 94% of the total number of family-related homicides against children and youth from 1994 to 2003.  
 72. Fathers includes biological, step, foster and adoptive fathers.  
 73. Mothers includes biological, step, foster and adoptive mothers.  
 74. The analysis is based upon a subset consisting of those victims who were killed by one person, representing 94% of the total number of family-related homicides against children and youth from 1994 to 2003.  
 75. Population of parents are based upon estimates from the 2001 General Social Survey, Cycle 15 (Statistics Canada, 2002).  
 76. It is not possible to calculate rates as the population of step-parents is currently unavailable.

**Figure 3.4**  
**Infants have the highest rate of homicide committed by a family member, 1994-2003**

Rate per million (0 to 17 years)<sup>1</sup>



1. Rates are calculated per million population according to the applicable age group and sex category.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

Like child abuse in general, as children age their risk of being killed by a family member tends to decrease. More specifically, among solved homicides since 1994, 88% of children aged 0-to-6 years and 75% of those aged 7-to-11 years were killed by family members. However, as adolescent dependency on the family decreases and their relationships grow beyond the family, they become less at-risk for homicide from family members. Those aged 12-to-17 years were more likely to be killed by someone from outside their family (67%), such as a casual acquaintance or a stranger, than by family members (33%). This was the same for both female and male youth.

#### **Frustration most common motive for family-related killings of young people**

Consistent with homicide-suicide motivations, data over the past 10 years show that homicides committed by family members against children and youth most commonly occurred as a result of frustration (39%).<sup>77</sup> This was particularly true when the victim was under 7 years of age and when the accused person was the victim's mother or father, which may be attributed to the stresses involved in caretaking. Other family members were more likely to kill older youth (12 to 17 year olds) than children, most often as a result of an argument or quarrel.

Police reported no apparent motive (e.g. the accused person was mentally ill) in just under one-quarter (24%) of all family-related homicides against children and youth. Other motives varied depending on the age of the child and the relationship to the accused person. Concealment (i.e. hiding the birth of a baby) was the motive behind 23% of homicides committed by mothers against infants; whereas,

revenge was the reason for fathers killing 27% of those between 7 and 17 years of age.

#### **Methods used to cause death vary by age of victim**

The methods used by family members to kill young victims tend to differ depending on the age of the victim.<sup>78</sup> Younger victims (0-to-6 years) are most often killed as a result of physical force, perhaps due to their greater physical vulnerability. Between 1994 and 2003, 27% of children aged 1-to-6 years were strangled or suffocated while another 25% were beaten to death (Table 3.5). Infants under one year of age are most often killed by shaking. Since 1997,<sup>79</sup> 27 infants (or 36%) have been killed as a result of Shaken Baby Syndrome.

Older children and youth (7-to-17 years) are more often killed with a weapon, most commonly a knife or a firearm. Between 1994 and 2003, a family member used a firearm to kill 38% of all family homicide victims aged 7-to-17 years. Another 19% of victims were stabbed to death by a family member.

#### **More than one-quarter of accused family members had a history of family violence**

Over the most recent ten year period, police reported a history of family violence between many young victims and accused family members (27%).<sup>80,81</sup> Among accused parents, a history of family violence was nearly twice as likely when the accused was the victim's father (31%) compared to when the accused person was the victim's mother (16%).

#### **Characteristics of accused<sup>82</sup>**

##### **Nearly one-third of accused family members had a criminal record**

Persons accused of killing a child or youth family member are less likely to have a criminal record than persons accused of killing a non-family child or youth. According to data collected since 1997,<sup>83</sup> less than one-third (31%) of family members had a criminal record prior to killing a child or youth. Of these, more than one-half (51%) had been

77. Excludes 36 homicides in which police reported motive as "unknown".

78. Excludes 8 homicides in which police reported the method used to cause death as "unknown".

79. The Homicide Survey began collecting information on Shaken Baby Syndrome in 1997.

80. The violence may have been reported to police prior to the homicide incident or become known to police during the course of the homicide investigation.

81. Excludes 47 victims for whom police reported history of family violence as "unknown". The incidence of prior family violence may be under-reported as it may not have been reported to police.

82. The analysis is based upon a subset consisting of those victims who were killed by one person, representing 94% of the total number of family-related homicides against children and youth from 1994 to 2003.

83. The Homicide Survey began collecting information on criminal history of the accused in 1997.

previously convicted of a violent offence, 33% for a property offence and 16% were for other *Criminal Code* offences.<sup>84</sup> In comparison, more than half (53%) of non-family members accused of killing a child or youth had a criminal record. The breakdown of offence types was similar to that for family members – 63% for violent offences, 27% for property offences and 10% for other *Criminal Code* offences.

**Family members accused of homicide against children and youth almost four times more likely than non-family members to have a mental or developmental disorder**

In 1997, the Homicide Survey began collecting information on the presence of a mental or developmental disorder (e.g. schizophrenia, manic depression or developmental delays) among persons accused of homicide.<sup>85</sup> Since that time, police have suspected the presence of a mental or developmental disorder among 34% of persons accused of family homicide against children and youth.<sup>86</sup> This figure is almost four times higher than the 9% reported for non-family members accused of killing children and youth.<sup>87</sup>

**3.3 Family homicides against older adults (65+)**

by Mia Dauvergne

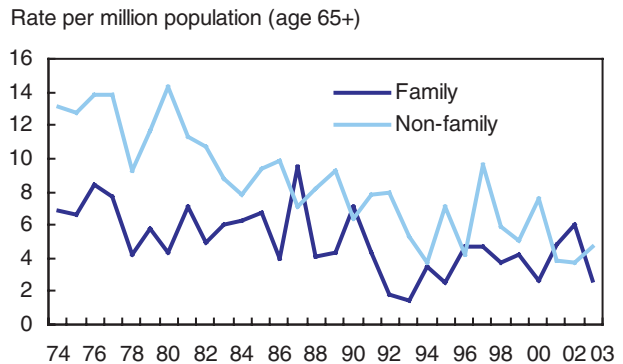
In 2003, there were 35 homicides (24 men and 11 women) committed against older adults (aged 65 years and older), representing about 6% of all homicides in Canada. Almost one-third of these homicides (11 or 31%) were committed by a family member, 12 by an acquaintance, 6 by a stranger and 1 by an intimate partner. Police reported the remaining 5 homicides as unsolved.

Despite annual fluctuations, the rates of family-related homicide against older adults since the 1990s have been considerably lower than the rates seen during the 1970s and 1980s. The rate in 2003 (2.7 per million older adults) was well below the high of 9.5 recorded in 1987. Between 1974 and 2003, the rates of non-family-related homicides against older adults have tended to decline and the gap between family and non-family-related homicide rates against seniors has subsequently narrowed (Figure 3.5).

**Older women most often killed by family members whereas older men most often killed by acquaintances<sup>88</sup>**

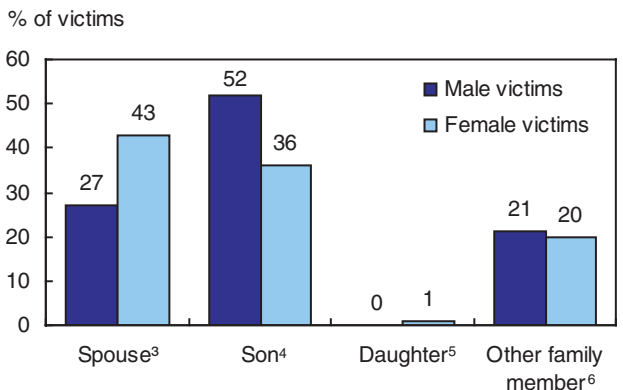
Older women are more likely to be killed by a family member than are older men. Among solved homicides between 1994 and 2003, more than two-thirds (67%) of older females were killed by a family member, usually a spouse (43%) or an adult son (36%) (Figure 3.6).<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, half (49%) of older men were killed by an acquaintance, usually by someone who the victim knew on a casual basis (51%) or a neighbour (22%). Among the 31% of older male victims who were killed by a family member, the majority were killed by their sons (52%).

**Figure 3.5**  
Rates of family and non-family homicides against adults 65 years and older decline, 1974-2003



Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

**Figure 3.6**  
Older adults most often killed by sons and spouses, 1994-2003<sup>1,2</sup>



**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.  
 1. Older adults refers to persons age 65 years or older.  
 2. The analysis of accused characteristics is based upon a subset consisting of those victims who were killed by one person, representing 95% of the total number of family-related homicides against older adults from 1994 to 2003.  
 3. Includes legal, common-law, separated, divorced and same sex spouses.  
 4. Includes biological, adoptive, foster and step-sons.  
 5. Includes biological, adoptive, foster and step-daughters.  
 6. Includes siblings, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, cousins and any other family member related by blood, marriage or adoption.  
 Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

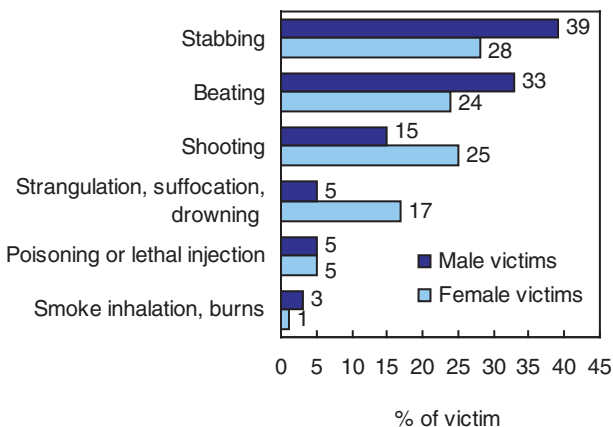
84. Excludes 145 accused persons for whom police reported previous conviction as "unknown".  
 85. This information reflects police perceptions as to the mental condition of the accused person and is not necessarily supported by a medical or health professional's assessment. As such, it should be interpreted with some caution.  
 86. Excludes 86 accused persons for which police reported the presence of a mental or developmental disorder as "unknown".  
 87. Excludes 94 accused persons for which police reported the presence of a mental or developmental disorder as "unknown".  
 88. The analysis is based upon a subset consisting of those victims who were killed by one person, representing 95% of the total number of family-related homicides against older adults from 1994 to 2003.  
 89. Excludes 2 homicides in which police reported the relationship between the accused and victim as unknown.

### Stabbings most common cause of death in family-related homicides against older adults

The methods used by family members to kill older adults differed depending on the gender of the victim (Figure 3.7). Between 1994 and 2003, family-related homicides against older adults were most likely to occur as a result of a fatal stabbing (32%); however the proportion was greater among male victims (39% versus 28% for female victims).<sup>90</sup> Beatings and shootings were also common methods of homicide, although men were more likely to have been beaten (33%) and women were more likely to have been shot to death (25%). Older women were three times more likely than older men to have been strangled, suffocated or drowned.

In contrast to homicides by family members, beatings were the most common method used by non-family members to kill older adults (41%), followed by stabbings (29%).<sup>91</sup> Further, a relatively small proportion of seniors were shot by a non-family member (8%).

**Figure 3.7**  
**Stabbings most common cause of death among family-related homicides against older adults, 1994-2003<sup>1</sup>**



1. Excludes 1 victim where the cause of the death was recorded as unknown by police.

Source: Homicide Survey, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada.

### Escalation of an argument most common motive for killing an older family member<sup>92</sup>

The motive underlying homicides against older adults differed depending on whether the accused was related to the victim. Between 1994 and 2003, family-related homicides against older adults most commonly resulted from the escalation of an argument or quarrel (29%).<sup>93</sup> Frustration, anger or despair accounted for another 26% of homicides. On the other hand, homicides perpetrated against older adults by non-family members were most often motivated by financial gain (31%).

### History of family violence more common among older male victims<sup>94</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Homicide Survey asks police respondents to indicate whether there had been a history or pattern of violence among homicides involving family members. The findings suggest that, as with family-related homicides of children and youth and spousal homicides, many homicides committed against older adults stemmed from a history of prior abuse. Between 1994 and 2003, police reported a history of family violence among 32% of family-related homicides against seniors.<sup>95</sup>

Prior violence was more often associated with homicides against older men than women (38% and 27% respectively), particularly when the accused person was the victim's spouse. There was a history of spousal violence among more than half (54%) of all older male victims compared to 22% of older female victims. It is important to note that the Homicide Survey does not identify the perpetrator of the violence, only that a history or pattern of violence between the victim and the accused person was present. As such, it is not possible to determine whether older women were striking back in response to abuse initiated by their male partners, whether women were the sole perpetrators of the violence or if the violence was committed by both individuals.

### Characteristics of accused<sup>96</sup>

#### Four in ten accused had a criminal record

Similar to family members accused of killing children and youth, those accused of homicides of older adults are less likely than non-family members to have a criminal record. According to data collected since 1997,<sup>97</sup> 42% of family members had a criminal record prior to killing an older adult. Of these, more than half (55%) had been previously convicted of a violent offence, including one for homicide. In comparison, almost two-thirds (65%) of persons accused of killing an older non-family member had a criminal record.

90. Excludes 1 homicide in which police reported cause of death as unknown.

91. Excludes 1 homicide in which police reported cause of death as unknown.

92. Excludes 9 homicides for which police reported motive as unknown.

93. Excludes 15 homicides in which police reported motive as unknown.

94. The analysis of accused characteristics is based upon a subset consisting of those victims who were killed by one person, representing 95% of the total number of family-related homicides against older adults from 1994 to 2003.

95. Excludes 7 homicides in which police reported history of family violence as unknown.

96. The analysis is based upon a subset consisting of those victims who were killed by one person, representing 95% of the total number of family-related homicides against older adults from 1994 to 2003.

97. The Homicide Survey began collecting information on criminal history of the accused in 1997.

### **One-half of all accused family members had a mental disorder**

Since 1997, when data became available on the presence of a mental or developmental disorder (e.g. schizophrenia, dementia or developmental delays) among persons accused of homicide,<sup>98</sup> police have suspected the presence of a mental or developmental disorder among almost half (45%) of family members accused of killing an older adult.<sup>99</sup> This is higher than what was found concerning child homicides, where about one-third (30%) were suspected of having a mental disorder. In the case of senior homicides, male accused were nearly twice as likely as female accused to be suspected of having a mental disorder (48% versus 27%).

### **Characteristics of the incident**

#### **First-degree murder most common charge against family members**

Between 1994 and 2003, half (50%) of all family-related homicides committed against older adults were classified as first-degree murder. Another 40% were classified as second-degree murder and the remaining 10% were manslaughter. These proportions are very similar to those found for all homicides in general. There was some variation in the classification of homicides depending on the victim's gender. Family-related homicides involving older male victims were somewhat more likely to be classified as manslaughter (16% compared to 6% for older female victims). Conversely, police considered slightly more homicides involving older female victims as first-degree murder (53% versus 46%).

98. This information reflects police perceptions as to the mental condition of the accused person and is not necessarily supported by a medical or health professional's assessment. As such, it should be interpreted with some caution.

99. Excludes 21 accused persons for which police reported the presence of a mental or developmental disorder as unknown.



**Table 3.1**  
**Family homicides by accused-victim relationship and sex of the victim, 1994 to 2003<sup>1</sup>**

Victim killed by:	Total victim		Female victim		Male victim	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total family homicides</b>	<b>1,695</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,011</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Male spouses</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
Married	229	14	229	23	...	...
Common-law <sup>2</sup>	225	13	222	22	3	...
Separated	167	10	167	17	...	...
Divorced	12	1	12	1	...	...
<b>Female spouses</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>23</b>
Married	53	3	...	...	53	8
Common-law <sup>2</sup>	90	5	3	...	87	13
Separated	18	1	...	...	18	3
Divorced	1	0	...	...	1	0
<b>Parent<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>423</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>33</b>
Father	280	17	126	12	154	23
Mother	143	8	71	7	72	11
<b>Child<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>194</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>15</b>
Daughter/step	22	1	11	1	11	2
Son/step	172	10	77	8	95	14
<b>Sibling</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>11</b>
Brother	87	5	18	2	69	10
Sister	7	0	3	0	4	1
<b>Other family<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>189</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>17</b>

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

... Figures not applicable

1. Excludes incidents where the sex of the victim was unknown.

2. Common-law relationship includes six same-sex spouses.

3. Parent includes biological, step, foster and adoptive parents.

4. Child includes biological, step, foster, and adoptive children.

5. Other family includes all others related to the victim through blood, marriage, foster care or adoption.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

**Table 3.2**  
**Number and rates of spousal homicide, 1974 to 2003<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

	Number		Rate per million spouses	
	Male spousal victim	Female spousal victim	Male spousal victim	Female spousal victim
1974	24	90	4.4	16.5
1975	33	91	5.9	16.2
1976	28	83	4.9	14.4
1977	30	80	5.2	13.6
1978	23	78	3.9	13.0
1979	22	90	3.7	14.7
1980	17	61	2.8	9.8
1981	27	82	4.3	12.9
1982	22	76	3.5	11.7
1983	28	84	4.3	12.8
1984	19	64	2.9	9.6
1985	25	86	3.8	12.7
1986	19	70	2.8	10.2
1987	35	79	5.2	11.5
1988	21	72	3.1	10.4
1989	22	76	3.2	10.9
1990	26	74	3.8	10.6
1991	25	87	3.6	12.4
1992	18	87	2.6	12.1
1993	24	63	3.3	8.5
1994	20	66	2.7	8.7
1995	21	71	2.8	9.2
1996	19	63	2.5	7.9
1997	13	63	1.7	7.9
1998	13	57	1.7	7.0
1999	10	58	1.3	7.1
2000	16	52	2.0	6.3
2001	17	69	2.1	8.2 <sup>r</sup>
2002	16	67	1.9 <sup>r</sup>	7.9 <sup>r</sup>
2003	14	64	1.7	7.5

<sup>r</sup> revised

1. Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated and divorced spouses, 15 years of age and over, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.
2. Spousal homicides reported by police include a small number of victims who were separated from a common-law relationship. As population estimates are unavailable for this sub-population, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.
3. Six same-sex partners were excluded from the analysis, due to the unavailability of population estimates.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

**Table 3.3**  
**Average number of victims and rates of spousal homicides, by region, 1994 to 2003<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

Region	Average 1994-2003	
	Number of victims	Rate
<b>Canada</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>4.91</b>
Atlantic	4	3.47
Quebec	17	4.45
Ontario	26	4.27
Manitoba	3	5.83
Saskatchewan	4	7.60
Alberta	10	6.21
British Columbia	13	5.98
Territories	2	33.38

1. Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated and divorced spouses, 15 years of age and over, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.
2. Spousal homicides reported by police include a small number of victims who were separated from a common-law relationship. As population estimates are unavailable for this sub-population, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.
3. Six same-sex partners were excluded from the analysis, due to the unavailability of population estimates.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

**Table 3.4**  
**Known causes of death among spousal and non-spousal relationships<sup>1,2</sup>, by sex, 1994 to 2003**

	Spouse <sup>3</sup>				Non-spouse <sup>4</sup>			
	Female victims		Male victims		Female victims		Male victims	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>693</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,463</b>	<b>100</b>
Shooting	196	31	28	18	133	19	726	29
Stabbing	182	29	104	66	253	37	865	35
Strangulation <sup>5</sup>	124	20	5	3	120	17	113	5
Beating	97	16	9	6	143	21	663	27
Other <sup>6</sup>	25	4	12	8	44	6	96	4

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes incidents where the accused-victim relationship was unknown.

2. Excludes those homicides where the cause of death was unknown.

3. Spouses include legally married, common-law, separated and divorced partners.

4. To control for the effects of age in the comparison of spousal and non-spousal homicides, non-spousal victims include only those individuals 15 years of age and older.

5. Strangulation includes suffocation and drowning.

6. Other includes poisoning or lethal injection, smoke inhalation, burns, exposure/hypothermia, or other type.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

**Table 3.5**  
**Methods known to cause death for child and youth victims of homicide committed by family members, Canada, 1994 to 2003**

Cause of death	Victim age											
	Total victims		< 1 year		1 to 3		4 to 6		7 to 11		12 to 17	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>443</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>
Strangulation <sup>2</sup>	103	23	31	25	35	28	17	30	9	14	11	14
Beating	89	20	32	26	34	27	11	19	6	10	6	8
Shooting	71	16	1	1	8	6	9	16	23	37	30	39
Stabbing	50	11	5	4	12	10	6	11	14	22	13	17
Shaken Baby Syndrome <sup>3</sup>	39	9	27	22	12	10	...	...	...	...	...	...
Poisoning or lethal injection	23	5	2	2	5	4	5	9	4	6	7	9
Fire (smoke inhalation, burns)	27	6	2	2	8	6	5	9	5	8	7	9
Other <sup>4</sup>	41	9	23	19	10	8	4	7	2	3	2	3

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

... figures not applicable

1. Excludes 8 victims in which police reported cause of death as unknown.

2. Strangulation includes suffocation and drowning.

3. Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) was added to the Homicide Survey as a cause of death in 1997.

4. Other includes exposure/hypothermia, deaths caused by a motor vehicle, starvation, heat, etc.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

## 4.0 Family homicide-suicides

by Cory Aston and Valerie Pottie Bunge

There is no standardized definition of murder-suicide, though researchers in the United States and elsewhere have examined the murder-suicide phenomenon looking for trends, risk factors and potential explanations for this type of violent behaviour (Van Wormer & Odiah, 1999), to date little has been done in Canada to study this phenomenon in a familial context. For the purpose of this chapter, a homicide-suicide is defined as those homicide incidents cleared by suicide by police. We use the term homicide-suicide as opposed to murder-suicide because in the Canadian context, 'murder' refers to a restricted set of incidents that do not include infanticide or manslaughter. As suicides following infanticides and manslaughters are included in this examination, we have chosen to refer to the general phenomenon as homicide-suicide. The manner in which the police clear a homicide by suicide is not determined by a specific time frame but is specific to the reporting procedure of the police force. A review of the homicide narrative reports by police indicates that the vast majority of reported suicides associated with a homicide took place immediately after the homicide.

This chapter examines homicide-suicide trends involving three populations; spouses, children and youth under the age of 18 and older adults (65 years of age and older). The following analysis use data from the Homicide Survey dating back to 1961 and explores the Homicide narratives to add contextual information.

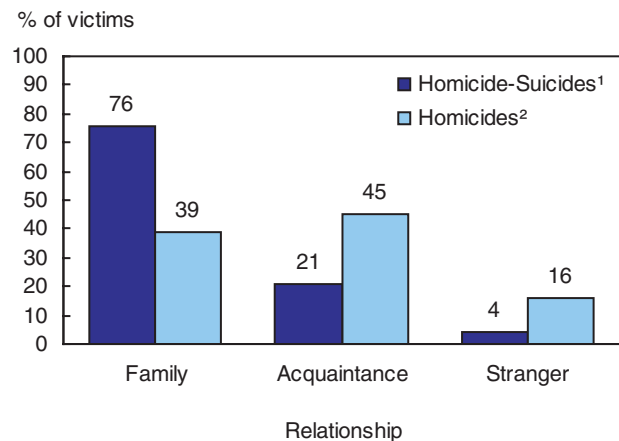
### Three-quarters of homicide-suicides are family-related

Between 1961 and 2003, there were a total of 22,945 victims of homicide in Canada.<sup>100</sup> Of the 19,219 solved cases, 1,994 (10 %) were victims of a homicide whereby the accused person committed suicide. The majority of these homicide-suicide victims were killed by a family member (76%) as opposed to an acquaintance (21%) or stranger (4%). This pattern differs from homicides in general wherein the majority of victims were killed by acquaintances (45%), followed by family members (39%) and strangers (16%) (Figure 4.1).<sup>101</sup>

### 4.1 Spousal homicide-suicides

The majority of familial homicide-suicides involved spouses (857, or 57%).<sup>102</sup> Over the 43 year time period being examined, this amounts to an average of 20 victims of

**Figure 4.1**  
Homicide-suicides most likely to be committed by a family member, 1961 to 2003



1. Based on 1,992 cases of solved homicide-suicides with 2 cases excluded due to unknown relationships between the victims and suspect.
2. Based on 19,139 cases of solved homicides with 80 cases excluded due to unknown relationship between the victim and suspect.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

spousal-homicide-suicides per year, ranging from a low of 11 in 1965 to a high of 35 in 1992.<sup>103</sup> The remaining 43% of familial homicide-suicides were committed by parents (33%), children or step-children (3%), siblings (2%) and other family members (5%).<sup>104</sup>

The majority of spousal homicide-suicides were committed by men classified as still being legally married to their

100. This is an underestimate of the actual number of homicide victims during this time period because prior to 1974, infanticides and manslaughters were not recorded by the Homicide Survey. There were actually 23,519 victims of homicide in Canada between 1961 and 2003 (Dauvergne, 2004).

101. Excludes 2 solved homicide-suicide cases and 80 solved homicide cases where the relationship between the victim and suspect was unknown.

102. Excludes 2 cases: 1 same-sex spousal homicide-suicide and 1 case wherein a male may have been miscoded as having a legally married husband.

103. As infanticides and manslaughters were not recorded in the Homicide Survey prior to 1974, this may partially explain the lower incidence of homicide-suicides in the years preceding the inclusion of those homicide types.

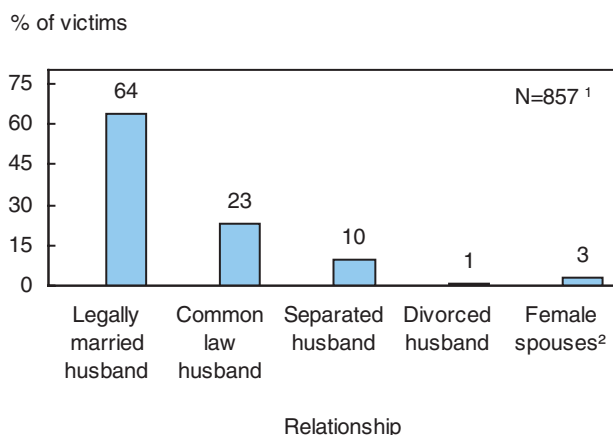
104. Other family members include all others related to the victim through blood, marriage, foster care, or adoption.

spouse (64%), followed by common-law husbands (23%), separated husbands (10%) and divorced husbands<sup>105</sup> (1%) (Figure 4.2). It appears that spousal homicide-suicides are a male-driven phenomenon as only 23 victims (3% of all spousal victims) were males killed by a female spouse. This finding confirms previous research which suggests men are much more likely than women to take their own lives after killing a spouse (Rosenbaum, 1990). Due to the small number of male victims killed by female spouses over the past four decades, the remaining analysis will focus on homicide-suicides against female spouses (834 or 97% of all spousal homicide-suicide victims).

In the vast majority (85%) of male perpetrated spousal homicide-suicides, the men killed only their wives<sup>106</sup> before committing suicide. The remaining 15% involved the killing of not only the wife, but others as well (9% involved 2 victims and 6% involved 3 or more victims<sup>107</sup>). In addition to the 834 wives killed during these incidents, there were 214 non-spousal victims for a total of 1,048 victims involved in spousal homicide-suicides between 1961 and 2003.

When multiple victims are involved, they are typically the perpetrators own children.<sup>108</sup> Sons and daughters accounted for 71% of the non-spousal victims killed in spousal homicide-suicides involving multiple victims.<sup>109</sup> The 152 child and youth victims killed over 127 incidents averages out to 1.2 children killed per incident of spousal homicide-suicide involving multiple victims. Furthermore, only 9 of the child and youth victims were step-children, the vast majority (94%) of children killed in these situations were the perpetrator's own biological or legally adopted child.

**Figure 4.2**  
**Spousal homicide-suicides most likely to involve male spouses, 1961 to 2003**



- Excludes 2 cases: 1 same sex spouse homicide-suicide and 1 case wherein the male may have been miscoded as having a legally married husband.
- Female spouses include: legally married, common law, separated and divorced women.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

### Firearms most frequent weapon used to commit spousal homicide-suicide

Shooting was, by far, the most common cause of death as 74% of male perpetrated spousal homicide-suicides involved firearms (Table 4.1). This was the case regardless of marital status at the time of the homicide and supports research by Easteal (1994) and Danson and Soothill (1996) who also found firearms to be the most common weapon used by men in spousal homicide-suicides. Van Wormer and Odiah (1999) have speculated that "if you shoot someone, it is relatively easy to then turn the gun on yourself. If one is able to stab or strangle someone, however, suicide becomes much more difficult".

The most common motives indicated by police on the homicide reports of spousal homicide-suicide were jealousy (33%) and argument/quarrel (26%).<sup>110</sup> This was more or less consistent regardless of the relationship between the male spouse and the female victim. It should be noted that accurate determination of a motive may be difficult for police in homicide-suicide scenarios due to the fact that the accused is deceased.

Between 1991 and 2003, the majority of spousal homicide-suicide victims were killed in (or around) a residential dwelling (90%)<sup>111</sup> (Table 4.2). The vast majority of legally married and common-law husbands who committed spousal homicide-suicide during these years did so in their jointly occupied residence (95% and 92% respectively). Understandably, divorced husbands are much more likely to commit the homicide-suicide within a residence occupied solely by the victim (86%). On the other hand, 49% of spousal victims killed by separated husbands were killed in their own home, 18% were killed within the suspect's residence, and 24% were killed in a non-residential building.

105. The relationship variable for divorced and separated couples was not collected by the Homicide Survey until 1991, which may partially explain why the percentage of divorced and separated husbands is so low.

106. Includes legally married, common-law, separated and divorced female spouses.

107. The number of victims always includes the female spouse, but excludes the male perpetrator.

108. Includes biological or legally adopted children and step-children of any age. Step-children include foster children, children under one's legal guardianship (not adoptive), or a spouse's biological or legally adopted child.

109. Of the remaining 29%, acquaintances accounted for 14% (including close friends, business associates, a spouse's new lover, etc.), other family members accounted for 11% (including siblings, parents, and all other family members related through blood, marriage, adoption or foster care), while strangers accounted for the remaining 3%. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

110. Excludes 70 cases in which the motive was unknown.

111. Prior to 1991 the only options available on the Homicide Survey were 'suspect' or 'victim' residence, thus all jointly occupied residences were likely coded as 'victim occupancy'. For the purpose of this analysis, the timeframe is limited to 1991 to 2003 to include residences that can be coded as 'jointly occupied'.

### Spousal Homicide-Suicide Narratives, 1991-2002

The narrative section of the incident report of the Homicide Survey was analyzed for additional information about the homicide-suicide incidents. Through the narrative section of the Homicide Survey, police officers can provide a summary of special or specific circumstances leading up to and surrounding a homicide incident. The narratives often provide greater detail and unique information about the circumstances of the homicide (e.g. extra-marital affairs) allowing for a better understanding of the contextual factors associated with the homicides, and in this case, homicide-suicides. The majority of police forces provide a narrative with each Homicide Incident report but the level of detail varies. For example, some police forces may indicate details such as the length of the couple's separation, whereas others may simply indicate that the couple was separated. As a result, the level of detail in the narratives varies and the information is not consistently reported across the country.

Narratives were not available for every homicide cleared by suicide. The present analysis reviewed Homicide narratives for those spousal homicide suicides occurring between 1991 and 2002.<sup>1</sup> Narratives were available for 237 of the 257 incidents of spousal homicide-suicide from this time period. Of these, 15 were incomplete and therefore excluded from the present analysis. The remaining 222 narratives break down into the following categories of accused: 45% were legally married husbands, 23% were common-law husbands or partners, 29% were separated husbands and 2% were divorced husbands.

According to the analysis of Homicide narratives, women who were leaving the relationship seemed to be at risk, especially in the first few weeks after expressing their intention to leave. Dissolution of the relationship was a major theme in many of the homicide narratives. 'Domestic problems' and/or 'marital break-up' were cited as a possible precursor for the deaths in 39% of cases involving legal spouses. The same themes continued for female victims in common-law relationships where a break-up was cited as the possible precursor in 39% of common-law homicide-suicides. The dissolution of the spousal relationship in cases of legally married or common-law couples was derived from the narratives with the use of phrases such as "ongoing marital problems", "sleeping in separate beds", "pending marital break-up" or if the female spouse voiced their intention to leave or separate.

For those incidents committed by separated husbands (65 or 29%) the length of separation was indicated in 29 of the narratives. Of these 29 narratives, 18 indicated that the female victim was killed within 3 months of separating from her male spouse. In fact, 9 homicide-suicides occurred within the first 2 weeks of separation. The narratives also revealed that at least 10 of the victims killed by separated husbands were murdered upon returning to the marital home to retrieve their belongings.

1. Narratives were only available electronically beginning in 1991 and are not yet complete for 2003.

### Previous history of family violence prevalent in spousal homicide-suicides

Since 1991, the Homicide Survey has been collecting data on whether or not a history of family violence between the suspect and victim was known to the police.<sup>112</sup> It is important to note that the Homicide Survey does not identify the perpetrator of the violence, only that a history or pattern of violence between the victim and the accused was present. Of the 262 men<sup>113</sup> accused of spousal homicide-suicides between 1991 and 2003, police reported that 44% had a history of family violence with the victim in question, though the direction of the violence is unknown. This was especially pronounced for separated husbands where 65% of the 83 estranged men had a known history of family violence (Table 4.3).

### Age of spousal homicide-suicide victims

Generally speaking, women are at greatest risk of being killed by a spouse when they are young (under 25 years of age) (Gannon, 2004). This was similar to the trend found for females who were victims of spousal homicide-suicides.

As shown in Figure 4.3, the homicide-suicide victimization rate was equal for women in the age categories 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 years of age (3.5 per million women in a spousal relationship).<sup>114,115</sup> The victimization rate was marginally higher for women under 25 (3.8 per million women in a spousal relationship) and slightly lower for those over 45 (approximately 2.5 per million women in a spousal relationship).

Overall, the average age of female victims was just under 42 while the perpetrator was slightly older at 46 years of age.

### Rate of spousal homicide-suicides lowest in Newfoundland and Labrador, P.E.I. and the Yukon

As shown in Figure 4.4, the highest rates of spousal homicide-suicide were recorded in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (9.8 victims per million women in a spousal relationship).<sup>116</sup> However, it should be noted that the total number of victims of spousal-homicides during this time period in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut was 4. The

112. The violence may have been reported to police prior to the homicide incident or become known to police during the course of the homicide investigation.

113. 12 cases were excluded for having an unknown history of domestic violence.

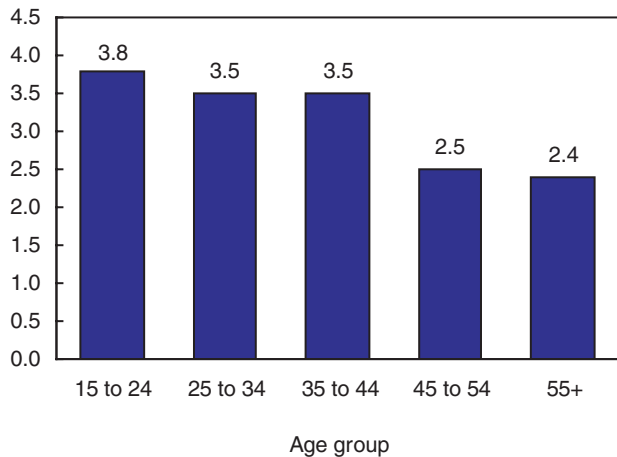
114. Spousal relationships include married, common-law, separated and divorced persons. Married persons (including common-law) refer to those whose husband or wife is living, unless a divorce has been obtained. Persons separated and persons living in a common-law relationship are also included in this category. Divorced persons refer to those who have obtained a divorce and who have not remarried, and who do not live in a common-law relationship.

115. Rates were calculated for the years 1971 to 2003 due to the availability of population data specifying marital status.

116. Prior to 1999, Nunavut was included in the boundaries of the Northwest Territories and because the data examined date back three decades, for the purposes of this analysis the territories have been combined.

**Figure 4.3**  
**Spousal homicide-suicide victimization rates by age group of female victims, 1971 to 2003<sup>1</sup>**

Rate per million females in a marital relationship



1. Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated, and divorced women based on estimates provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada. Rates were calculated from 1971 to 2003 due to the availability of population data.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

remaining provinces hovered around the national average of 3.1 per million women in a spousal relationship. The exceptions were Newfoundland and Labrador (0.7 per million women in a spousal relationship), P.E.I. and the Yukon (no recorded cases of spousal homicide-suicide).

## 4.2 Homicide-suicides involving children and youth (under 18 years of age)

Of the 1,994 victims of homicide cleared by suicide between 1961 and 2003, over one quarter (517 or 26%) were children or youths under the age of 18. This averages to 12 victims per year ranging from a low of 3 in 1968 and 1972 to a high of 26 in 1986.<sup>117</sup>

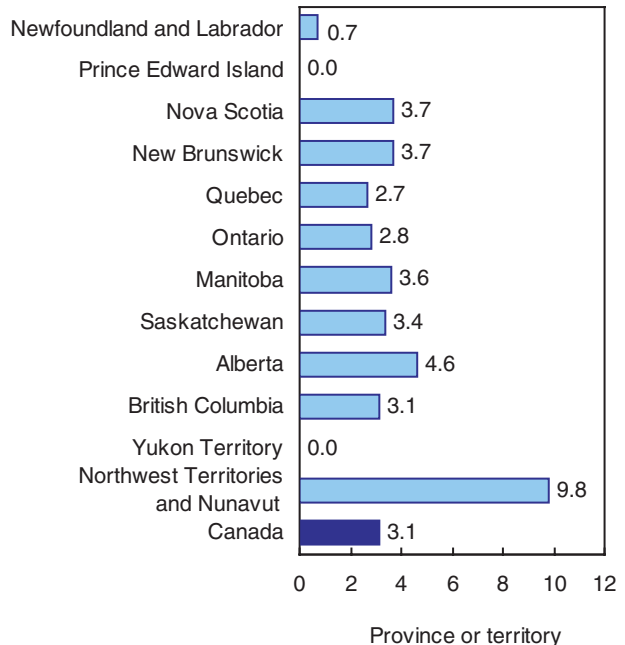
The majority of these child and youth victims (459 or 89%) were murdered by a parent or step-parent (Table 4.4), and the remaining 11% were killed by family members other than a parent (5%), acquaintances (6%) or strangers (1%). The remainder of this section will focus on homicide-suicides involving a parent-child relationship.

### Parent-child homicide-suicides most likely to involve fathers

While men were more likely than women to kill a child and then themselves, parent-child homicide-suicides are not a male-driven phenomenon as was the case in spousal homicide-suicides. Of the 459 child victims murdered by a parent, 69% were killed by their father, 3% by their step-father and 28% by their mothers.<sup>118</sup>

**Figure 4.4**  
**Spousal homicide-suicide rates lowest in Newfoundland and Labrador, P.E.I. and the Yukon, 1971 to 2003<sup>1</sup>**

Rate per million females in a marital relationship



1. Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated, and divorced women 15 years of age and over based on estimates provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada. Rates were calculated from 1971 to 2003 due to the availability of population data. Based on 601 spousal homicide-suicides, 1971 to 2003.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

### Boys and girls equally likely to be victimized by a parent

Whereas females were more likely to be victims of spousal homicide-suicides, boys and girls under the age of 18 were at relatively equal risk of being a victim of a parent-child homicide-suicide (52% and 48% respectively).<sup>119</sup> Fathers were slightly more likely to kill a son (54%) while step-fathers and mothers were slightly more likely to kill a daughter (58% and 53% respectively) (Table 4.5).

117. As previously mentioned, infanticides and manslaughters were not recorded in the Homicide Survey prior to 1974 which may partially explain the lower incidence of homicide-suicides in the years preceding the inclusion of those homicide types.

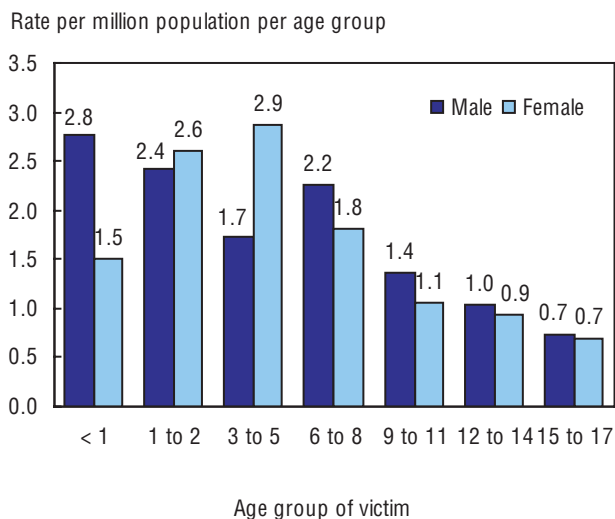
118. For this analysis parents include biological and step-parents. Parents include biological or legally adoptive mothers and fathers, whereas step-parents include legal guardians (not adoptive), foster parents or the spouse of the victim's biological or legally adoptive mother or father. There have been no homicide-suicides recorded in Canada involving step-mothers since 1961.

119. Equal parental homicide-suicide victimization rates were also found for boys and girls under the age of 18 (1.6 per million boys and girls under the age of 18 respectively).

### Boys under 1 and girls between 1 and 5 years of age at greatest risk of parental homicide-suicide

Generally speaking, children under 1 are at the greatest risk of being murdered by a parent (Gannon, 2004). In terms of parental homicide-suicides, boys under 1 are still at the greatest risk. In fact, boys under 1 are nearly twice as likely as girls under 1 to be the victim of a homicide-suicide at the hands of a parent (2.8 per million boys under 1 versus 1.5 per million girls under 1 respectively). The rate for boys generally declines with age. Conversely, girls are at greatest risk of parental homicide-suicide between the ages of 3 and 5 (2.9 per million girls between 3 and 5 years old), followed closely by girls 1 to 2 years old (2.6 per million girls between 1 and 2 years old). The rate peaks for girls for the 3 to 5 age group, and steadily declines with age thereafter (Figure 4.5).

**Figure 4.5**  
Boys under 1 and girls between 1 and 5 years old at greatest risk of homicide-suicide victimization by a parent, 1971 to 2003, Canada<sup>1</sup>

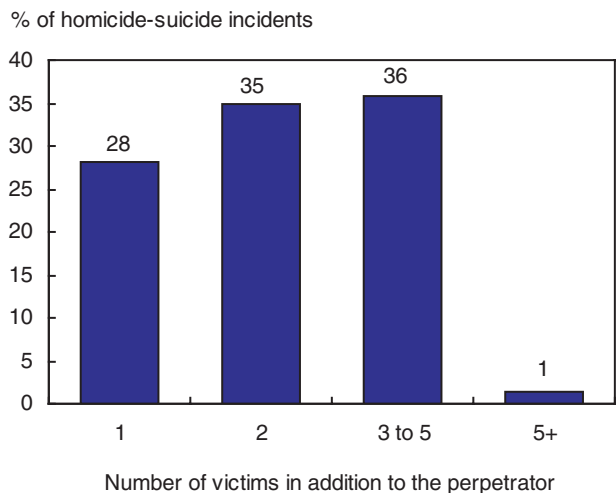


1. Rate per 1,000,000 population under the age of 18, based on estimates provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada. Rates were calculated from 1971 to 2003 due to the availability of population data.  
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

As was the case with spousal homicide-suicides, shooting was the most common cause of death in parent-child homicide-suicides (46%).<sup>120</sup> Among cases where the motive was known, the main reasons were frustration (17%) and revenge (16%), however the motive was classified as 'other' or 'no apparent motive' for the majority of child homicide-suicide victims (219 or 53%).<sup>121</sup> It should be noted however, that in instances where the stated motive was revenge, the homicide narratives indicate that these feelings were often directed to the child's other parent rather than to the child victim.

Parent-child homicide-suicides often involve multiple victims (Figure 4.6). Between 1961 and 2003, only 28% of the children killed were the sole victim involved in the homicide-suicide (aside from the perpetrator). The majority of children killed during these incidents were just one of multiple victims.<sup>122</sup> Among the incidents involving more than one victim, almost two-thirds (65%) of the victims were also children<sup>123</sup> of the perpetrator. The remainder of the other victims killed in parent-child homicide-suicides were the perpetrator's spouse or common-law partner (31%), other family members<sup>124</sup> (2%), and acquaintances (2%)<sup>125</sup>.

**Figure 4.6**  
Parent-child homicide-suicides most likely to involve multiple victims, 1961 to 2003



Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

### 4.3 Homicide-suicides of older adults (65 years of age and over)

Seven percent of the 1,994 homicides cleared by suicide in Canada between 1961 and 2003 involved victims 65 years of age or over. Again, the majority of these incidents were family-related (109 or 83%) with the remaining 17% being

120. Excludes 1 case in which the cause of death was unknown.  
121. The motive was classified as 'other' or 'no apparent motive' or was unknown in 266 cases which were excluded from the calculations.  
122. The number of victims always includes at least one child victim under the age of 18, but excludes the perpetrator (parent or step-parent).  
123. Includes biological or legally adopted children and step-children of any age. Step-children include foster children, children under one's legal guardianship (not adoptive), or a spouse's biological or legally adopted child. Six percent of these other sons and daughters were over the age of 18.  
124. Including siblings, parents, and all other family members related through blood, marriage, adoption or foster care.  
125. Including casual acquaintances, business relationships and strangers.



committed by acquaintances or strangers.<sup>126</sup> Of the 109 familial homicide-suicides involving those over 65 years of age, 65% were spousal with the remaining 21% perpetrated by sons or step-sons, 2% by daughters, 2% by brothers and 10% by other family members.<sup>127</sup>

The majority of spousal homicide-suicide victims aged 65 and over were women (67 or 94% of spousal homicide-suicide victims aged 65 years and over). However, older women and men were equally likely to be a victim of homicide-suicide perpetrated by family members other than their spouse (55% and 45% respectively).

As was the case in other homicide-suicides, shooting was the most common cause of death (63% of homicide-suicide victims aged 65 and over). This was consistent regardless of the relationship between the victim and perpetrator.<sup>128</sup>

Examining data from 1974 to 2001, AuCoin (2003) revealed that spousal homicides involving victims aged 65 and older tend to be characterized by the suicide of the accused in higher numbers than in cases involving victims under the age of 65 (36% and 27% respectively).

#### 4.4 Summary

The majority of homicide-suicides committed in Canada between 1961 and 2003 involved family members. Spousal homicide-suicides are a male-driven phenomena, which confirms Easteal's (1994) research with Australian intimate partners. Factors leading up to a spousal homicide-suicide may include jealousy, arguments/quarrelling, and/or the dissolution of the relationship. Females are especially at risk of victimization when leaving a relationship.

Parent-child homicide-suicides are likely to involve multiple victims and the gender split of the victims is fairly even. Boys are at greatest risk to be victimized by a parent under 1 years of age, whereas girls are at greatest risk between 1 and 5 years of age.

There have been relatively few incidents of homicide-suicides involving persons 65 years of age and older in Canada. Over half of these incidents involved spouses, and according to police-reported narratives, the homicide-suicide may be more related to deteriorating quality of life than the dissolution of a spousal relationship.

In general, firearms were the most common weapon used in homicide-suicides regardless of the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim(s).

#### Homicide-suicide typologies

Easteal (1994) examined trends of homicide-suicide amongst Australian "sexual intimates" and found that typically, they fall into one of two typologies. The first is elderly partners facing deteriorating health and the second is males estranged from their female partners "and pathologically possessive of them".

The following typologies were derived from the 338 Homicide Survey narratives pertaining to familial homicide-suicides between 1991 and 2002. Almost three quarters (72%) involved spouses and the remaining 28% were family-related but non-spousal (e.g. children, siblings, parents and all others related to the victim through blood, marriage, foster care, or adoption).

##### "Heat of the moment":

This homicide-suicide is typically unplanned and often stems from an argument (finances and adultery were common themes in the spousal reports). Intoxication may also be a factor and a note is seldom left.

##### "Mercy Killing"/"Suicide Pacts":

As Easteal (1994) mentions, this type of homicide-suicide often occurs with elderly persons facing deteriorating health, but may also involve persons with physically and/or mentally challenged children or spouses. Suicide may follow the homicide as a result of fear of incarceration, guilt or the belief that one cannot live 'alone' or without the other. Mercy killings and suicide pacts are hard to distinguish as both parties are deceased and a note may or may not be left.

##### "Delusional":

Rare, but often accompanies a mental disorder (such as manic-depression, schizophrenia, etc.). The perpetrator may experience paranoia, obsessive thoughts, and/or a drastic change in personality preceding the homicide-suicide.

##### "Frustration/Anger":

Most spousal homicide-suicides would fit under this typology which is similar to Easteal's (1994) typology of estranged sexual intimates. However these themes also appeared in homicide-suicides between parents and their children. In terms of spouses, the frustration and/or anger was related to money and employment stresses but more typically over marital or family breakdown (separation). Jealousy of a new lover may also be a factor. The homicide-suicide often follows shortly after the separation (typically within the first 3 months). Depression can be a major factor, especially for men (Rosenbaum, 1990). In terms of parents and children, the anger felt is usually directed at the other parent and the homicide is meant to indirectly hurt the spouse, not the child.

126. Excludes one homicide in which the police reported the relationship between the suspect and the victim as unknown.

127. Other family members include all others related to the victim through blood, marriage, foster care, or adoption.

128. Motive was not examined in homicide-suicides involving persons aged 65 and older as 63% of the 132 incidents were classified as having no apparent, unknown or 'other' motives.

Table 4.1

**Spousal homicide-suicides - Known cause of death by relationship, Canada, 1961 to 2003<sup>1</sup>**

	Total	Cause of death									
		Shooting		Stabbing		Strangulation, suffocation, Beating		Drowning		Other <sup>2</sup>	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Victim killed by:</b>											
Legally married husband	545	403	74	47	9	31	6	48	9	16	3
Common law husband	193	142	73	26	13	7	4	14	7	4	2
Separated husband	85	63	74	10	12	3	4	7	8	2	2
Divorced husband	7	4	57	1	14	0	0	1	14	1	14

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes 4 cases in which cause of death was unknown.

2. Other causes of death include poisoning, lethal injection, smoke inhalation, dehydration, motor-vehicle, etc.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Table 4.2

**Spousal homicide-suicides - Occupancy of residence where incident occurred, Canada, 1991 to 2003<sup>1</sup>**

	Total	Occupancy of residence									
		Joint		Victim only		Suspect only		Neither		Other <sup>2</sup>	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Victim killed by:</b>											
Legally married husband	117	111	95	2	2	0	0	1	1	3	3
Common law husband	65	60	92	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	8
Separated husband	85	4	5	42	49	15	18	4	5	20	24
Divorced husband	7	1	14	6	86	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Prior to 1991 the only options available on the Homicide Survey were 'suspect' or 'victim' residence, thus all jointly occupied residences were likely coded as 'victim occupancy'.

For the purposes of this analysis, the timeframe is limited from 1991 to 2003 to include residences that can be coded as 'jointly occupied'.

2. Other includes any non-residential building or area.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey

Table 4.3

**Spousal homicide-suicides - History of family violence by relationship, Canada, 1991 to 2003<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

	Total	History of family violence			
		Yes		No	
		No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Victim killed by:</b>					
Legally married husband	113	34	30	79	70
Common law husband	59	21	36	38	64
Separated husband	83	54	65	29	35
Divorced husband	7	6	86	1	14

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes 12 cases wherein the history of family violence was unknown.

2. Analysis was restricted to this time frame as family violence history was not collected on the Homicide Survey prior to 1991.

3. The violence may have been reported to police prior to the homicide incident or became known to police during the course of the homicide investigation.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

**Table 4.4**  
**Homicide-suicides involving children and youth under 18 years of age by relationship, Canada, 1961 to 2003**

Relationship of accused to victim	No.	%
<b>Parent or Step-Parent<sup>1</sup></b>		
Father	319	62
Step-father	12	2
Mother	128	25
Step-mother	0	0
<b>Total Parent or Step-parent</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Non-Parent</b>		
Brother	4	1
Sister	0	0
Other family <sup>2</sup>	14	3
Spouse	3	1
<b>Total non-parent</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5</b>
Acquaintance	33	6
Stranger	4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>100</b>

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Parents include biological or legally adoptive parents, whereas step-parents include legal guardians (not adoptive), foster parents or the spouse of the victim's biological or legally adoptive parent.

2. Other family includes all other family members related through blood, marriage, adoption or foster care.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

**Table 4.5**  
**Parent-child homicide-suicides - Relationship by sex of victim, Canada, 1961 to 2003**

	Total	Sex of victim			
		Boys		Girls	
	No.	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Victim killed by:</b>					
Fathers	319	172	54	147	46
Step-fathers	12	5	42	7	58
Mothers	128	60	47	68	53
Step-mothers	0	0	0	0	0

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

## 5.0 Family violence against children and youth<sup>129</sup>

by Karen Beattie

Examining the nature and extent of child abuse or maltreatment of children and youth is a complex issue covering a variety of negative experiences and conditions, such as physical assault, sexual assault, emotional/psychological abuse, neglect and witnessing violence. All forms of child abuse and maltreatment can have detrimental and lasting effects on children and youth and the families in which they live.

While there is no single source of national data on the nature and extent of child abuse in Canada, there are a number of data sources that provide information on certain forms of abuse. For example, the Incident-Based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey captures information on physical and sexual assaults that are reported to police. This includes both the incidents that occurred in the year they were reported as well as those where a victim reported abuse which occurred in a previous year.

While police-reported data can provide information about the incident and the characteristics of cases that come to the attention of police, they cannot provide information about crimes that go unreported. Some child and youth victims may not perceive that they have been abused or that the violence they experienced was a crime. Victims may also choose not to report their victimization for a variety of reasons, including fear, shame, embarrassment, or concern for the abuser (See Text Box, Youth are unlikely to report their victimization to police).

This chapter will focus on the physical and sexual assaults against children and youth (under the age of 18) that were reported to police services in 2003. In addition, other forms of child maltreatment and child abuse are presented including the extent to which children and youth witness violence in the home. System responses to the issue of child maltreatment and violence will be examined, using information from the Transition Home and Victim Services Surveys. As well, recent policy developments to address and improve the situation of family violence against children and youth in Canada will be highlighted.

### 5.1 Police-reported family violence against children and youth

#### Prevalence of police-reported violence against children and youth

A principal source of information on the prevalence of violence against children and youth is police statistics. These data reflect both physical and sexual assault offences that come to the attention of the police and where charges can be laid. Other types of abuse, such as emotional/psychological abuse or witnessing violence, are not chargeable offences and are therefore not included in these data.

The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics collects data on violence against children and youth through the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey. In 2003, this survey collected data from 122 police services across Canada, which represented 61% of the national volume of crime. The UCR2 provides detail on the types of assaults experienced by children and youth, the characteristics of child and youth victims and the characteristics of the person accused of harming them.

In 2003, children and youth under the age of 18 represented 21% of Canada's population and accounted for 25% of all victims of physical and sexual assaults reported to police.<sup>130</sup> Among the approximately 37,300 assaults reported by the 122 police services in 2003, physical assaults against children and youth out numbered sexual assaults by 3 to 1 (approximately 28,000 compared to 9,300 respectively).

Almost three quarters (71%) of all police-reported assaults against children and youth were perpetrated against youth, aged 12-to-17 years old. Children aged 3-to-11 years old accounted for 27% of all assaults, and children under the age of 3 accounted for the remaining 2% of all assaults.

129. Children and youth are often victims of other violations of violence not presented here, including harassment, robbery, uttering threats and abductions. For more detailed information on violence against children and youth, including violence perpetrated by non-family members, refer to, AuCoin, K. 2005. Children and youth as victims of violent crime. Statistics Canada: Ottawa.

130. Sexual assault includes sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault and the "other sexual crimes" category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc. Physical assault includes assault levels 1, 2 and 3, unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.

The rate of all police-reported assaults against children and youth was 1,099 per 100,000 population under the age of 18. Overall, the risk of physical assault (823 per 100,000 children and youth) was greater for children and youth compared to the risk of sexual assault (275 per 100,000 children and youth). Additionally, the rate of physical assault was higher for male children and youth (984 per 100,000 males versus 654 per 100,000 females) while the rate of victimization for sexual assault was higher for females (452 per 100,000 females compared to 107 per 100,000 males).

### **Youth are unlikely to report their victimization to police**

The number of crimes that go unreported to police is considerable. Often referred to as the “dark figure” of crime, many victims keep their victimization hidden. Victimization surveys, such as the General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS), provide detailed information on criminal incidents that are both reported and not reported to police, thus enhancing the information on the extent of criminal victimization. The GSS also examines the reasons why people may choose not to report to police.

Among the population 15 years of age and older, youth aged 15-to-17 years old are the least likely to report their victimization to police. Results from the GSS (1999) indicate that 18% of all victimizations against youth were reported to police. This finding is lower than the proportion of older victims, such as those aged 20-to-24 year olds (29%), 40-to-44 year olds (38%), and 60-to-64 year olds (53%) who reported their incidents to police. The relationship between the victim and the alleged suspect influenced the rate at which youth (15-to-17 years) report victimization incidents, only 8% of family-related victimizations against youth came to the attention of police. In contrast, victimizations alleged to have been committed by a friend or acquaintance (18%) and 24% of victimizations by a stranger were reported to police.

### **Youth state that family-related victimizations most often ‘dealt with another way’**

When asked about the main reason for not reporting their family-related victimization to police, the most common reason given by youth victims was that the incident was ‘dealt with another way’ (47%). In addition, while it was common for older age groups to say that ‘police couldn’t do anything to help’ or that ‘police wouldn’t help’, this was not the case for 15-to-17 year old victims. However, 15% of youth victims of family-related victimizations stated that they ‘feared revenge by the offender’, while older victims rarely, if ever, gave this reason as their main reason for not reporting their victimization.

Although youth aged 15-to-17 represent only a portion of the assaults committed against children and youth, data from the GSS on children under the age of 15 are not available.

### **Children and youth primary victims of sexual assaults**

Although children and youth under the age of 18 represented approximately 21% of Canada’s population, according to 122 police services representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003, they accounted for a disproportionately high proportion of victims of sexual assault (61%) compared to physical assaults (21%) (Table 5.1).

This high incidence of sexual assault was particularly evident for females, who were victims in approximately 8 out of 10 sexual assaults committed against children and youth. These findings are consistent with research highlighting the over-representation of female victims of sexual assault (AuCoin, 2005; Kong et al., 2003; Locke, 2002; Finkelhor and Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994).

### **Child and youth victims most likely to know accused**

Nearly one-third (32%) of sexual assaults committed against children and youth were perpetrated by family members (Table 5.2). Friends or acquaintances were responsible for the largest proportion of all sexual offences against children and youth (48%), while strangers were the accused in 13%. These findings were similar for girls and boys.

Overall, while friends or acquaintances were most likely to commit physical assaults against children and youth, approximately one in five physical assaults was family-related (21%). Although the pattern of sexual assault was similar for girls and boys, girls were more likely to be physically assaulted by a family member (28% of girls compared to 16% of boys), and boys were more likely to be victimized by a stranger (22% versus 14% for girls).

### **Proportion of family-related assaults decreases with age**

Although friends and acquaintances accounted for the largest proportion of accused responsible for the victimization of children and youth, there were differences among age groups. Among the 10,700 children under the age of 12 who were victims of physical and sexual assaults, reported to 122 police services in 2003, friends and acquaintances, and family members each accounted for roughly 40% of all accused while strangers represented 11%.

In contrast, as children get older and their social interactions and relationships move beyond the family, victimization by non-family members becomes more prevalent. For example, youth aged 12-to-17 were victims in about 26,500 incidents and were more likely than younger victims to have been assaulted by a friend or acquaintance (53%) or a stranger (20%) than a family member (17%).

The declining proportion of assaults by family members as children and youth age is particularly evident for physical assaults. While 65% of physical assaults against children

under the age of 3 involved a family member, this was the case in only 16% of physical assaults against youth aged 15-to-17 (Table 5.3).

**Female youth represent the majority of family-related physical and sexual assault victims**

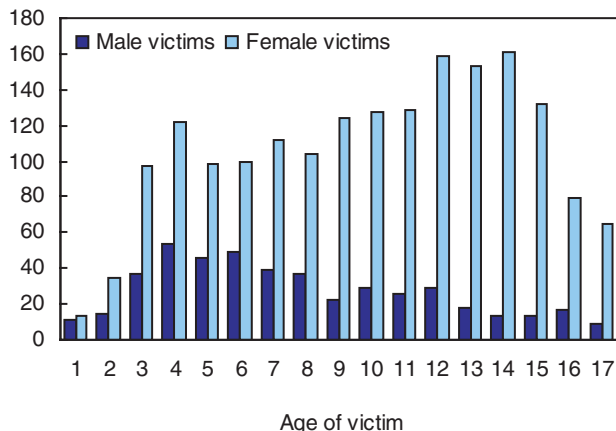
Although family-related assaults as a proportion of all assaults decreased with age, the rates of family-related assaults increased with age.

In cases of family-related sexual assaults, the rate was highest for female youth aged 12-to-14, with the highest rate at age 14 (160 per 100,000 females). Male children aged 4-to-6 years had the highest rates of family-related sexual assault among male victims, with the highest rate at age 4 (54 per 100,000 males) (Figure 5.1).

As illustrated in Figure 5.2, the rates of family-related physical assault against children under the age of 12 were higher for boys compared to girls. However, the rates of physical assaults for female youth aged 13-to-17 surpassed that of male youth. Rates of family-related physical assaults were highest for females aged 17, at 329 per 100,000 females, approximately 2.5 times greater than that for 17-year-old males (129 per 100,000 males).

**Figure 5.1**  
**Family-related sexual assault rates highest for teenage girls and young boys, 2003,<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>**

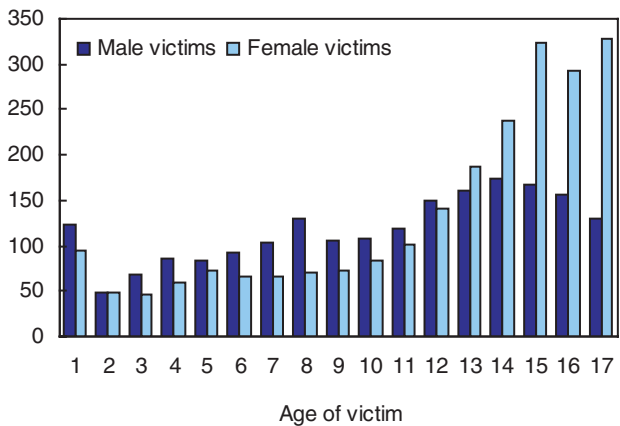
Rate per 100,000 males and females



1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown.  
 2. Excludes incidents where the relationship between the victim and accused was unknown.  
 3. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.  
 4. Sexual assault includes sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault and the "other sexual crimes" category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc.  
 5. Rate per 100,000 population under the age of 18, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

**Figure 5.2**  
**Rates of family-related physical assaults increase with age, especially for teenage girls, 2003<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>**

Rate per 100,000 males and females



1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown.  
 2. Excludes incidents where the relationship between the victim and accused was unknown.  
 3. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.  
 4. Physical assault includes common assault (level 1), aggravated assault (levels 2 and 3), unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.  
 5. Rate per 100,000 population under the age of 18, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

**Family-related assaults most often involved a parent**

Of the nearly 8,850 cases of family violence reported to a subset of 122 police departments, parents were the primary accused against children and youth (60%). Parents represented 70% of family members accused of physical assault and 40% of those accused of sexual assault against children and youth.<sup>131</sup>

While siblings accounted for 18% of family-related physical assaults against children and youth, they accounted for a larger proportion of family-related sexual assaults (31%). Extended family members were also more likely to be involved in family-related sexual offences against children and youth compared to physical assaults. More than one-quarter (28%) of all family-related sexual assaults against children and youth involved an extended family member compared to 8% of physical assaults. Further, spouses were involved in 5% of physical assaults while less than 1% of all sexual assaults involved a spouse.

131. Parents include biological parents, or the legal guardian with legal custody and care of the child, i.e. foster parent, step-parent, and adoptive parents. The UCR2 does not permit distinction between these types of parent.

### Historical assaults reported in 2003

The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey captures information on crime reported to police each year, including the offence date and duration of violence. Overall, the majority of crimes are reported at the time of the offence. However, on occasion, crimes may come to the attention of police after the time of the offence, and in some cases, many years after the crime has been committed.

The process of making a decision to report a criminal victimization is often complex. There are a variety of reasons why an individual would choose not to report their victimization, and some of these have been discussed previously in this chapter, as well as in Chapters 1 and 2. The feelings and consequences associated with being a victim of child abuse, such as fear of retaliation, guilt, shame or anger, may continue into adulthood. Consequently, young victims of abuse may choose to report their victimization as an adult for these reasons, or they may not have had the opportunity to report an incident at the time of the abuse.

Historical assaults in the present analysis are defined as sexual or physical assaults that were committed against a child or youth between 1949 and 1999 and were reported to police in 2003. Of the approximate 37,000 sexual and physical assaults against children and youth that were reported in 2003, roughly 3% (approximately 900 assaults) were historical occurring between 1949 and 1999 and reported to 122 police services participating in the survey. Of these reported incidents, 54% occurred between 1990 and 1999, 23% occurred between 1980 and 1989, followed by 15% between 1970 and 1979 and the remaining 7% between 1949 and 1969.

The majority of reported historical assaults were sexual assaults (95%). Cases of historical sexual assaults against children and youth accounted for a larger proportion of the total reported sexual assaults than was the case for historical physical assaults. While historical physical assaults represented less than 1% of all reported physical assaults

in 2003, historical sexual assaults represented 9% of all reported sexual assaults reported to police. Given the over-representation of historical assaults as sexual, the remainder of this analysis will focus only on reported historical sexual assaults.

Overall, approximately 9 in 10 (97%) historical sexual assaults against children and youth were committed by someone known to the victim.<sup>1</sup> Family members were involved in 6 out of 10 historical sexual assaults (61%), while 36% of historical sexual assaults involved a friend or acquaintance and 3% involved strangers. In contrast, family members were involved in over one third (35%) of all reported sexual assaults against children and youth in 2003. Among all cases of sexual assault involving a family member, historical sexual assaults accounted for nearly one in five reported sexual assaults in 2003 (17%).

The majority of victims of historical sexual assault were female (68%). Most of these assaults reported by females involved family members (70%). In contrast, less than half (43%) of historical sexual assaults reported against males involved a family member.

Most historical sexual assaults were against children aged 6 to 11 years old (46%), followed by youth aged 12 to 17 (41%) and children under 6 (13%). However, the pattern of sexual abuse differed for male and female children and youth. While half of females reported being a victim of sexual assault between the ages of 6 and 11 (50%), males were most likely to have been a victim as a youth, aged 12 to 17 years old (47%).

Parents were the family members accused in 37% of historical sexual assaults, followed by siblings (34%) and extended family members (29%). Parents accounted for a larger proportion of accused where a male victim was present compared to female victims (43% versus 34%) while siblings were the more common accused for female victims (36%) compared to male victims (28%).

1. This analysis excludes those incidents where the relationship between the victim and accused was unknown or where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown.

### Physical assaults against children and youth by siblings increases with age

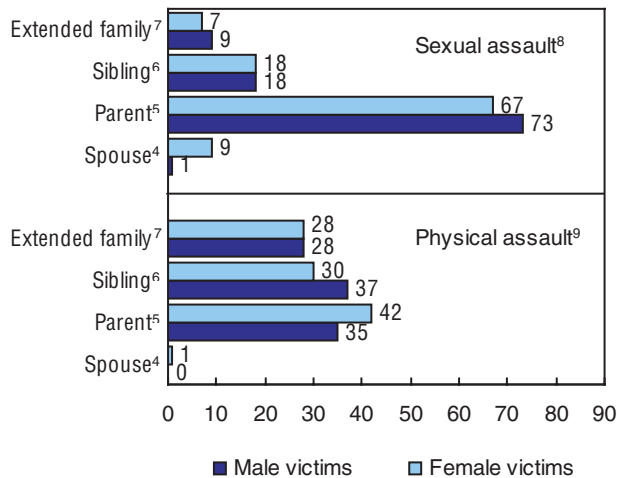
As children age, the share of family-related physical assaults involving a parent decreases while the proportion of assaults involving siblings increases. While parents accounted for 91% of physical assaults against children under the age of 3, they represented 53% of assaults against youth aged 15-to-17. In contrast, the share of physical assaults involving siblings increased incrementally with age, from 4% of victims under the age of 3 to 25% of victims aged 15-to-17. In incidents of family-related sexual assault, the share of sexual assaults involving siblings was highest for 6 to 8 year olds (39%) and 9 to 11 year olds (35%). Further, 13% of all physical assaults and 3% of all sexual assaults against youth aged 15-to-17 involved a spouse (Table 5.4).

Among family-related incidents, parents were more likely to be the accused in physical assaults for both male (73%) and female victims (67%). However, in incidents of sexual assault, parents were more commonly accused when a female victim was present (42%) compared to those where a male victim was present (35%). In sexual assaults involving male victims, siblings were most likely to be the accused (37%) (Figure 5.3).

### Males are accused in majority of family-related violence

According to police-reported statistics, male family members represented the majority of accused in family-related assaults (80%). Of all sexual assaults against children and youth by a family member, 98% involved a male relative. In contrast, 72% of physical assaults involved a male relative.

**Figure 5.3**  
**Children and youth most often physically assaulted**  
**by a parent in family-related assaults<sup>1,2,3</sup>**  
 % of victims of physical and sexual assault



**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.  
 1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown.  
 2. Excludes incidents where the relationship between the victim and accused was unknown.  
 3. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.  
 4. Spouses include legally married, common-law, separated and divorced.  
 5. Parent includes natural, step, half, foster or adoptive parents. This category may include a small number of cases where the relationship between the accused and victim was miscoded.  
 6. Sibling includes natural, step, half, foster or adoptive siblings.  
 7. Extended family includes others related by blood, marriage, adoption or foster care.  
 8. Sexual assault includes sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault and the “other sexual crimes” category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc.  
 9. Physical assault includes assault levels 1, 2 and 3, unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

In incidents where male family members were involved in physical assaults, fathers were the most commonly accused (61%), followed by brothers (21%), extended family members (8%) and spouses (10%). In incidents of sexual assault, fathers were involved in 38% of all sexual assaults, followed by brothers (33%) and male extended family members (28%).

Of the 28% of physical assaults committed by a female family member, mothers were the primary accused in nearly three quarters (74%), followed by sisters (16%), and extended family members (9%).

**Few children and youth sustain a major injury**

In cases of family-related physical and sexual assaults against children and youth, almost half did not sustain a physical injury (48%). Thirty-eight percent of children and youth victims suffered minor injuries and only 1% of children and youth suffered from major injuries. Minor injuries are

defined as those that require no professional medical treatment or only some first aid. Major injuries are defined as those that require professional medical attention at the scene or transportation to a medical facility. Twelve percent of children and youth sustained an injury which was not classified as either minor or major.

Overall, male children and youth were more likely than their female counterparts to be injured as a result of violence. For example, male children and youth were at a higher risk of minor injury as a result of violence (45%) compared to females (34%). Moreover, injuries were more likely to be reported in incidents of physical assault compared to sexual assault. One explanation for this could be that the injuries sustained by a victim of physical assault are more visible and are therefore easier to report. Since males were more likely than females to be physically assaulted, this may also reflect the higher risk of injury among males compared to females.

While only 1% of females and 2% of males sustained a major injury, the prevalence of a major injury as a result of family-related assaults was highest for children under 3 years of age. Specifically among victims of family-related violence, 10% of females and 14% of males under 3 years old suffered a major injury. One possible explanation for this is that very young children may be more susceptible to physical injury due to their physical vulnerability. Further, as the youngest victims are less capable than older children of communicating abuse before it escalates to a major injury, the abuse tends to be more serious in nature when it does come to the attention of police. Major injuries are also more visible to a third party who may report suspected abuse to police on behalf of very young children.

In family-related incidents where an injury was present, physical force was the method of injury in 85% of sexual assaults and 79% of physical assaults. The use of a knife or other cutting instrument was more common when a sibling was accused (5%) compared to a parent (1%) or an extended family member (3%). Parents were more likely to have caused an injury using other weapons<sup>132</sup> (11%) compared to siblings (7%).

**5.2 Trends in family violence against children and youth**

According to data from 71 police services across Canada who have reported consistently to the UCR2 since 1998, representing 46% of the national volume of crime, rates for both sexual and physical assaults against children and youth decreased in 2003. Rates of non-family related sexual assaults have been approximately double those of family-related sexual assaults each year since 1998, and rates of non-family related physical assaults approximately three to four times higher than rates of family-related physical assaults (Table 5.5).

132. Other weapons might include vehicles, pepper spray, whips, and other objects that may be used for strangulation.



### Family-related assaults against children and youth declined in 2003

Since 1998, family-related sexual assaults increased somewhat steadily until 2003, when the rate of family-related sexual assault decreased slightly. Similarly, the rates of physical assaults by family members generally increased since 1998. However, in 2003, the rate of family-related physical assault decreased (Table 5.5).

Between 1998 and 2003, the pattern of family-related assaults was similar for males and females. Following a generally steady increase since 1998, the rates of family-related physical and sexual assaults declined in 2003 for both males and female children and youth.

### 5.3 Children witnessing family violence in the home

Another form of victimization experienced by children and youth is witnessing violence. The long-term effects of witnessing violence in the home for children have been well-established in recent research. Children who witness family violence often display elevated rates of depression, aggression, delinquency, and other emotional problems (Sternberg et al., 1993; Edleson, 1999; Fitzgerald, 2004). Research also suggests that there may be an overlap between children who witness family violence and children who experience direct violence themselves (Jaffe et al., 1990). According to the 2004 General Social Survey on Victimization, a person other than the spouse was harmed or threatened in 11% of spousal assaults in the previous five years, of which 44% were children under the age of 15.

According to the 2004 GSS, 394,000 spousal violence victims reported that children saw or heard this violence, representing one-third (33%) of all victims of spousal violence.<sup>133</sup> There were no children in the house at the time of the spousal violence in 31% of households, and 35% of victims reported that children did not see or hear violence. (Table 5.6).

#### Female victims of spousal violence more likely to report child witnesses to violence

Overall, female victims of spousal violence in the five years prior to the survey were more likely to report that children saw or heard this violence (40%) than male victims of spousal violence (25%).

Of all spousal violence relationships where the victim reported children saw or heard violence during the five-year period prior to the survey, 4 in 10 (40%) reported that they feared for their life and 44% reported that they were physically injured because of the violence (Table 5.6). Additionally, 49% of women victims with child witnesses to violence reported that they feared for their life compared to 22% of male victims with child witnesses to spousal violence. Furthermore, 52% of women victims with child witnesses sustained injury as a result of the violence, compared to 28% of male victims in similar circumstances.

### A Canada Fit for Children

In April 2004, following the United Nations Special Session on Children in 2002, Canada responded with a plan of action, A Canada Fit for Children. This report has been developed with Canadians from every sector of society and all levels of government, as well as children. It contains a declaration of Canada's commitment to children, and recommended action on key priorities within four central themes: supporting families and strengthening communities; promoting healthy lives; protecting children from harm; and promoting education and learning.

This plan of action recognizes that strong relationships must exist among children and parents, legal guardians, and other family members, direct caregivers and community members to ensure the healthy development of children (Par. 56). It recognizes the importance of healthy family relationships fostered by: child- and family-friendly policies; improved efforts to reduce poverty; and, special supports to respond to families experiencing separation and divorce. Specific attention is given to Aboriginal families, immigrants and refugees, children with disabilities, and children who are living on the streets.

The plan of action recognizes that child maltreatment, including physical and sexual abuse, emotional maltreatment and neglect, continues to be a significant issue in Canada, posing serious immediate and long-term risks to the health and development of children. When children are maltreated, or are at significant risk of being maltreated, state authorities have an obligation to intervene to protect them and/or assist them, preserving the family unit whenever it is safe and reasonably possible (Par. 121). The plan of action states that Canada is committed to protecting children from harm, and will continue to support approaches that promote effective prevention and intervention, recognizing the underlying factors that can contribute to situations of abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect. Partners will seek to understand the complex and multi-faceted nature of child maltreatment, and will identify and promote approaches that include improved prevention and intervention, coordination and collaboration, national data collection, research and policy development, promotion of community awareness and community capacity building (Par. 125).

**Source:** A Canada fit for children: Canada's plan of action in response to the May 2002 United Nations special session on children. 2004. Government of Canada.

### 5.4 Services provided to child and youth victims of family violence

In the last three decades, the concern for victims of crime has received much attention. Governments and non-profit organizations have implemented various programs and services to address the needs of victims. In more recent years, the need for national data on the existence and use

133. Where incidents of spousal violence are reported in the five years prior to the survey, the GSS asks respondents whether a child may have seen or heard this violence.

of these services has been identified as a necessary tool to better address the needs of victims. Consequently, Statistics Canada's Transition Home Survey and the Victim Services Survey were developed to obtain information on services for victims of crime.

The Transition Home Survey collects information on residential services and facilities for abused women and their children every two years. Data are collected on the characteristics of the facilities and services provided during a 12-month period across Canada. Information is also collected on snapshot day.<sup>134</sup>

According to the most recent survey, between April 1, 2003 and March 31, 2004, more than 95,000 women and children were admitted to 473 shelters across Canada. On snapshot day, April 14, 2004, there were approximately 6,100 women and dependent children in shelters, the majority of which were there to escape abuse (76% of women and 88% of children). Two-thirds of children accompanying their mothers to escape abuse were under the age of ten (67%), with children under the age of five accounting for 40% of

all children admitted. The survey also found that 65% of all shelters provided individual counseling for children and almost six in ten provided programs for children who witnessed or experienced abuse (57%) (Taylor-Butts, 2005).

Similar to the Transition Home Survey, the Victim Services Survey, conducted in 2003, provides a profile of non-residential victim service agencies and examines client characteristics across Canada through a one-day snapshot (October 22, 2003). Among the 484 services who responded to the survey, 41% provided specific programs for children, largely focusing on programs for victims of sexual abuse and physical abuse, neglect and domestic violence. Data collected on the snapshot day found that 1 in 5 clients were children under 18 years of age (18%). Of these children, the majority were victims of family-related crimes against the person (90% of female and 75% of male children and youth victims) (Kong, 2004).

134. A snapshot is a one-time profile of all services and programs in existence for a particular day.

Table 5.1

Victims of physical and sexual assault by age group, reported to a subset of police departments, 2003<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Type of assault	Total victims	Number of children and youth victims (under 18) and proportion of total victims		Number of adult victims (18+) and proportion of total victims		Number and proportion of total children and youth victims by age group					
						< 3		3-11		12-17	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Assault - Total</b>	<b>150,685</b>	<b>37,305</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>113,380</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10,006</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26,584</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Sexual assault - Total</b>	<b>15,319</b>	<b>9,352</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>5,967</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3,954</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>5,243</b>	<b>56</b>
Aggravated sexual assault	105	43	41	62	59	0	0	14	33	29	67
Sexual assault with a weapon	244	67	27	177	73	0	0	11	16	56	84
Sexual assault	13,329	7,869	59	5,460	41	122	2	3,197	41	4,550	58
Other sexual crimes <sup>4</sup>	1,641	1,373	84	268	16	33	2	732	53	608	44
<b>Physical assault - Total</b>	<b>135,366</b>	<b>27,953</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>107,413</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6,052</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21,341</b>	<b>76</b>
Assault level 3	1,873	255	14	1,618	87	55	22	19	7	181	71
Assault level 2	28,910	5,572	19	23,338	81	84	2	1,050	19	4,438	80
Assault level 1	98,298	21,819	22	76,479	78	394	2	4,919	23	16,506	76
Unlawfully causing bodily harm	595	103	17	492	83	10	10	11	11	82	80
Discharge firearm with intent	98	24	24	74	76	0	0	9	38	15	63
Assault against peace-public officer	4,228	0	0	4,228	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Criminal negligence c/ bodily harm	180	63	35	117	65	13	21	9	14	41	65
Other assaults	1,184	117	10	1,067	90	4	3	35	30	78	67

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.

2. Data are not nationally representative. The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collected data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.

3. Children and youth include all those under the age of 18.

4. Other sexual crimes include such offences as sexual interference, sexual exploitation, invitation to sexual touching, incest, anal intercourse and bestiality.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 5.2

Child and youth victims of physical and sexual assault by sex of victim and relationship to accused, reported to a subset of police departments, 2003<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Relationship of accused to victim	Total assault						Sexual assault <sup>4</sup>						Physical assault <sup>5</sup>					
	Sex of victim						Sex of victim						Sex of victim					
	Total		Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total		Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,305</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>18,327</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>18,978</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9,352</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7,492</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,860</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27,953</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>10,835</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17,118</b>	<b>100</b>
Family <sup>6</sup>	8,848	24	5,448	30	3,400	18	3,020	32	2,393	32	627	34	5,828	21	3,055	28	2,773	16
Friend/acquaintance <sup>7</sup>	18,526	50	8,871	48	9,655	51	4,448	48	3,532	47	916	49	14,078	50	5,339	49	8,739	51
Stranger	6,552	18	2,571	14	3,981	21	1,202	13	1,032	14	170	9	5,350	19	1,539	14	3,811	22
Unknown <sup>8</sup>	3,379	9	1,437	8	1,942	10	682	7	535	7	147	8	2,697	10	902	8	1,795	10

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.

2. Data are not nationally representative. The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collected data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.

3. Children and youth include all those under the age of 18.

4. Sexual assault includes sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault and the "other sexual crimes" category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc.

5. Physical assault includes assault levels 1, 2 and 3, unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.

6. Includes spouse, ex-spouse, parent, child, sibling, and extended family.

7. Includes any relationship in which the accused and the victim are familiar with each other, but are not related, or in a legal guardianship relationship.

8. Includes cases where the relationship between the victim and the accused is unknown.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

**Table 5.3**

**Child and youth victims of physical and sexual assault by age group of victim and relationship to accused, reported to a subset of police departments, 2003<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

Relationship of accused to victim	Sexual assault <sup>4</sup>							Physical assault <sup>5</sup>						
	Total	Age of victim						Total	Age of victim					
		< 3	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17		< 3	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
<b>Total assault victims</b>	<b>9,352</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>1,106</b>	<b>1,282</b>	<b>1,566</b>	<b>2,963</b>	<b>2,280</b>	<b>27,953</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>825</b>	<b>1,641</b>	<b>3,586</b>	<b>9,185</b>	<b>12,156</b>
	No.	%						No.	%					
Family <sup>6</sup>	3,020	55	49	45	40	25	19	5,828	65	62	43	23	16	16
Friend/acquaintance <sup>7</sup>	4,448	34	38	38	43	55	52	14,078	15	21	35	52	56	51
Stranger	1,202	4	4	9	11	14	20	5,350	8	8	12	15	19	23
Unknown <sup>8</sup>	682	7	9	7	6	6	9	2,697	12	9	10	9	9	10

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.
2. Data are not nationally representative. The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collected data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.
3. Children and youth include all those under the age of 18.
4. Sexual assault includes sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault and the "other sexual crimes" category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc.
5. Physical assault includes assault levels 1, 2 and 3, unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.
6. Includes spouse, ex-spouse, parent, child, sibling, and extended family.
7. Includes any relationship in which the accused and the victim are familiar with each other, but are not related, or in a legal guardianship relationship.
8. Includes cases where the relationship between the victim and the accused is unknown.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

**Table 5.4**

**Age of victim and type of assault against children and youth by family members, reported to a subset of police departments, 2003<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

Relationship of accused to victim	Sexual assault <sup>4</sup>							Physical assault <sup>5</sup>						
	Total	Age of victim						Total	Age of victim					
		< 3	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17		< 3	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
<b>Total victims</b>	<b>3,020</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>5,828</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>709</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>1,497</b>	<b>1,920</b>
	No.	%						No.	%					
Parent <sup>6</sup>	1,213	64	44	30	33	42	52	4,057	91	84	81	77	72	53
Sibling <sup>7</sup>	937	19	30	39	35	30	20	1,030	4	9	11	15	20	25
Extended family <sup>8</sup>	844	17	25	31	32	27	25	452	5	7	9	8	6	9
Spouse/ex-spouse <sup>9</sup>	26	0	0	0	0	2	3	289	0	0	0	0	2	13

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.
2. Data are not nationally representative. The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collected data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.
3. Children and youth include all those under the age of 18.
4. Sexual assault includes sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault and the "other sexual crimes" category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc.
5. Physical assault includes assault levels 1, 2 and 3, unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.
6. Includes a small number of cases where age or the relationship between the accused and the victim may have been miscoded.
7. Sibling includes natural, step, half, foster or adopted siblings.
8. Extended family includes others related by blood, marriage, adoption or foster care.
9. Spouses/ex-spouses include legally married, common-law, separated and divorced partners.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 5.5

**Child and youth victims of sexual and physical assault by accused-victim relationship, reported to a subset of police departments, 1998-2003<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>**

Year	Sexual assault <sup>6</sup>				Physical assault <sup>7</sup>			
	Accused-victim relationship				Accused-victim relationship			
	Family <sup>8</sup>		Non-family <sup>9</sup>		Family <sup>8</sup>		Non-family <sup>9</sup>	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
1998	1,944	57	3,984	117	3,805	112	13,244	389
1999	1,886	55	3,953	116	3,857	113	13,022	382
2000	2,052	60	4,227	124	4,191	123	14,401	423
2001	2,110	62	4,164	122	4,120	121	14,047	412
2002	2,333	68	4,310	126	4,436	130	13,891	407
2003	2,205	65	4,009	118	4,040	119	13,177	388

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.

2. Excludes incidents where the accused-victim relationship was unknown.

3. Children and youth include all those under the age of 18.

4. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 71 police services which accounted for 46% of the national volume of crime as of December 31, 2003.

5. Rate per 100,000 population under the age of 18, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.

6. Sexual assault includes sexual assault, sexual assault with a weapon, aggravated sexual assault and the "other sexual crimes" category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc.

7. Physical assault includes assault levels 1, 2 and 3, unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.

8. Family includes spouse, ex-spouse, parent, child, sibling and extended family.

9. Non-family includes close friend, business relationship, casual acquaintance and stranger.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Trend Database.

Table 5.6

**Severity of violence witnessed or heard by children, past 5 years, 2004 General Social Survey**

	Total		Violence against women		Violence against men	
	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%	No. (000s)	%
<b>Total violence by any spouse</b>	<b>1,199</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>653</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>100</b>
Children saw or heard violence	394	33	258	40	136	25
Children did not see or hear violence	423	35	202	31	221	40
No children at the time	373	31	191	29	182	33
Not stated don't know	9	1	2	0	7	1
<b>Total with children who saw or heard violence</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>
Parent feared for their life	157	40	127	49	30	22
Parent did not fear for their life	237	60	131	51	105	77
<b>Total with children who saw or heard violence</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>
Parent was physically injured	172	44	134	52	38	28
Parent was not physically injured	222	56	124	48	99	73

**Note:** Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

## 6.0 Family violence against older adults<sup>135,136</sup>

by Kathy AuCoin

In 2003 persons over the age of 65 represented 13% of the Canadian population compared to 11% in 1991. It is projected that persons age 65 years and over will represent 15% of the population of Canada by the year 2011. Concern for the well-being of seniors is heightened by the fact that this segment of the population is growing faster than any other age cohort. There are numerous implications for Canadian society as a result of this growth including meeting the health needs of an aging population as well as ensuring that seniors are not victims of violent crime either from within or outside of the family.

Older persons may be the victims of violent crime as well as other forms of mistreatment and neglect. Such behaviors can fall within the category of senior abuse. Senior abuse is defined in many different ways, but in general it includes five behaviors: first, emotional/psychological abuse which includes intimidation, threats, verbal aggression and/or behaviors that are intended to control, instill fear and/or cause a person to fear for their safety; second, physical abuse which has been defined as shaking, force feeding, confinement and inappropriate handling; third, sexual abuse which includes inappropriate touching and other forms of unwanted sexual behaviors; fourth, financial abuse which includes withholding money, misuse of power of attorney and controlling the older person's financial resources; and finally, neglect which involves the omission of care and the failure to provide the senior with necessities – such as medicine, food and medical care (Hightower and Smith, 2003)

Some researchers believe that due to the aging process, seniors are more vulnerable to being victims of abuse relative to younger adults. As the individual ages the likelihood of disability increases –these may include mobility, hearing, vision, and speech as well as cognitive disabilities. As a result of these disabilities, the individual may become a target of abuse. According to some studies, persons with disabilities are 50% more likely to be victims of violence or abuse (Roehrer Institute, 1995). Other researchers believe that senior abuse, specifically within the family, is the result of intergenerational conflict and often reflects a history of domestic violence. The rationale is that a child who was abused by a parent has learned these negative behaviors which are then used against the aging parent. A relationship of interdependence between the older victim and abuser either based on finances or living conditions is

also believed to contribute to the prevalence of senior abuse. Finally, some researchers believe that senior abuse is the result of emotional and/or psychological problems of the abuser or in some instances the result of caregiver stress (McDonald and Collins, 2000).

### Underreporting of family-related violence against seniors

Measuring the prevalence and incidence of family violence against older persons is hampered by the fact that older victims of family-related violence may choose not to report the incident either to the police or other authorities. Fear for their own personal safety, fear of retaliation, or fears of losing the relationship of a caregiver/family member/companion are just a few of the reasons that an older person may choose not to report their victimization. In addition, measurement of the victimization of seniors may be hindered for those victims who may be physically or cognitively unable to report the abuse.

Despite the fact that many instances of family-related violence against seniors may not be reported to the police, it is still beneficial to analyze police data to obtain an understanding of the victim, accused and incident characteristics of family-related violence against seniors. The following analysis focuses on family-related violence committed against older adults reported to the police in Canada. The analysis draws on data provided by 122 police services representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003. In addition, the analysis reviews trend data to determine if there has been an increase or decrease in the rate of family-related assaults of older persons.

### Older adults least likely to be victimized

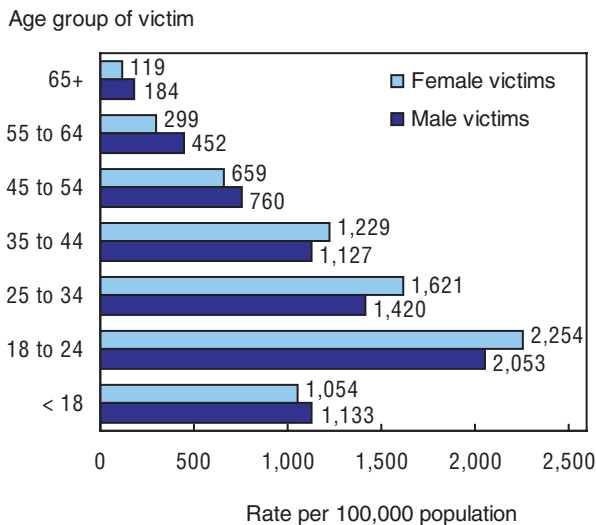
Consistent with previous years, persons over the age of 65 were the least likely age group to be victims of violent crime in 2003. Older male victims were victimized at a rate of 184 per 100,000 and females at a rate of 119 per 100,000 population (Figure 6.1). Differences in rates of victimization

135. For the purposes of this chapter, the terms “older adults” and “seniors” are used interchangeably and refer to Canadians aged 65 years and over.

136. The 2004 General Social Survey on Victimization will provide data on the nature and extent of criminal victimization, perceptions of crime and levels of fear as experienced by seniors and will be available in 2006.

between the sexes are greatest for this older population relative to younger age groups with senior male rates of victimization 55% greater than those for senior females. The difference in rates is significant relative to persons under the age of 55 years (Figure 6.1).

**Figure 6.1**  
**Persons aged 65+ least likely to be victims**  
**of violent crime, 2003**<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>



1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown.
  2. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police services representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.
  3. Violent crimes includes violations causing death, attempting the commission of a capital crime, sexual assaults, assaults, violations resulting in the deprivation of freedom, and other violations involving violence or the threat of violence.
  4. Rate per 100,000 population, based on estimates provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada.
- Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime reporting (UCR2) Survey.

## 6.1 Prevalence of violence against older adults

In 2003, just under 4,000 incidents of violence against older persons were reported to the police. These incidents were perpetrated almost equally against older women (46%) and men (54%). Six out of ten of these victimizations were committed by persons from outside of the family (63%). Just over half of older female victims (54%) were victimized by someone from outside of the family, while this was the case for seven out of ten older male victims (71%) (Table 6.1).

When considering only assaults against seniors committed by a non-family accused, more than half were strangers (53%) and close to one third were carried out by a casual acquaintance (30%) (Table 6.1).

### Older women more likely to be victimized by a family member

Older women are more likely than older men to be victims of family violence. In 2003, four out of ten older female

victims (39%) were victimized by a family member while, this was the case for two out of ten older male victims (20%) (Table 6.1).

When considering only family-related assaults reported to the police in 2003, older female victims were more likely to be victimized by a spouse (34%) or an adult child (33%), followed by other family members (24%).<sup>137</sup> In contrast, one third of older male victims were victimized by an adult child (33%), while one fifth were assaulted by a spouse (20%).

### Older victims experience common assault in both family and non-family related assaults

Regardless of whether or not the accused was a family member, older victims were more likely to experience common assault. Common assault includes behaviours that do not result in serious injury including pushing, punching and slapping and threatening to apply force. Considering only older victims of family-related assaults, both male and female victims were more likely to experience common assault (55%). In addition, about one in five older victims of family-related violence experienced uttering threats (19%) and major assault (16%) (Table 6.2). Just over one quarter (28%) of seniors victimized by a non-family member were robbed.

### Four in ten older victims experienced an injury

For older adults, the consequences of being a victim of a violent crime can be relatively more serious than for younger adults. In 2003, over one third of older victims sustained a minor injury (36%) as a result of an offence perpetrated by a family member. Major physical injury, which required professional attention at the scene or transportation to a medical facility, was experienced by 3% of older victims. Older female and male victims were about equally likely to sustain some form of injury (41% and 37% respectively) (Table 6.3).

### Most injuries a result of physical force<sup>138</sup>

In 2003, almost eight out of ten older victims injured in a family-related assault had been harmed through physical force (77%) while 14% were injured with a weapon. Older victims were injured with a club/blunt instrument (4%), a knife (3%), or 'other' weapon (7%)<sup>139</sup> (Table 6.4).

Methods of injuring older victims differed slightly depending on the sex of the victim. Older women were more likely to have been injured with physical force (80% compared to 71% of men), while older male victims were more likely to

137. Other family member includes sibling, either natural, step, half, foster or adopted, and all others related to the victim either by blood or by marriage, e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins and in-laws.

138. Due to data quality issues that result in physical force being coded as "other" Toronto is excluded from the analysis on method of violence causing injury.

139. Other weapons include vehicles, pepper spray, whips, and other objects that may be used for strangulation.

be injured with a weapon (22% compared to 10% of older female victims) (Table 6.4).

## 6.2 Characteristics of accused

### Male adult children and spouses most often accused in family-related assaults of older adults

Male family members were the majority of accused (78%) in incidents of family-related assaults of older adults. One third of accused were adult male children (33%)<sup>140</sup>, followed by male spouses (current and ex-spouses) (30%), and extended male relatives, including uncles, brother-in-laws and brothers (15%). Those females accused of victimizing an older adult were most often a wife (current and ex-spouses) (10%), daughter (6%) or a female extended family member (6%).

When considering only those family members accused of assaulting an older female victim, the proportion of accused that are male increases to 85%, with the majority of accused being a spouse/ex-spouse (43%) followed by a son (30%). In contrast, older male victims were more likely to be victimized by a son (39%) followed by a spouse/ex-spouse (31%) (Figure 6.2).

The average age of spouses accused of victimizing their partners was 66 years of age, while the average age of accused adult children was 40 years of age.

### Adult children who assault a parent often living with older victim

As would be expected, the majority of family-related assaults of older victims took place in their home, and the victim and accused were often sharing living quarters. About eight out of ten older victims assaulted by an adult child were living with the assailant. This finding provides some support to the notion that abuse of an aging parent by an adult child may in fact be a result of dependency issues between an adult child and their aging parent. The dependency could either be from the adult child on the aging parent or vice versa.

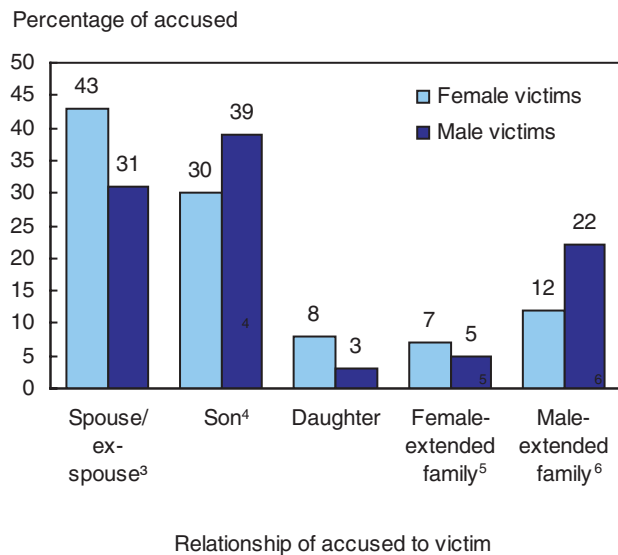
## 6.3 Trends in police-reported violence against older adults, 1998-2003

It is possible to examine trends in family-related violence against older adults for those police departments that have consistently reported to the Incident-based Uniform Crime reporting (UCR2) survey. This non-representative UCR2 Trend Database contains data for the years 1998-2003 from 71 police services across Canada, representing 46% of the national volume of crime in 2003.

### Two years of decline in family and non-family related rates of assault against older victims

Overall, victimization rates for seniors have declined since 2000 for both older males and females. Female rates of family-related violent offences increased year-over-year

**Figure 6.2**  
Older females aged 65 and over, victimized by spouses, older men by sons in family related assaults, 2003<sup>1,2</sup>



1. Data are not nationally representative, based on data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.
  2. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or where the relationship between the victim and accused was unknown.
  3. Spouse category for male victims include 4% of accused who were in a same sex relationship.
  4. Includes a small number of cases where age or the relationship between the accused and the victim may have been miscoded.
  5. Female extended family members includes sisters, aunts, sister-in-laws and nieces.
  6. Male extended family members includes brothers, brother-in-laws, uncles and nephews.
- Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

between 1998 and 2000 peaking at 53 assaults per 100,000 population. These rates remained unchanged for the following two years and subsequently fell in 2003 to 46. Similarly, rates of non-family related violent offences against older women also rose between 1998 and 2000 but fell each succeeding year a rate of 68 per 100,000 in 2003 (Table 6.5).

At the same time, rates of violence against older male victims have experienced a similar pattern, with an increase in family-related rates between 1998 and 2001, peaking at 41 assaults per 100,000 population and have since fallen to 37 in 2003. Rates of non-family related assaults were highest in 2000 at 149 assaults per 100,000 but have since dropped to 142 per 100,000 in 2003.

However, there has been a narrowing in the gap between

<sup>140</sup>. Includes a small number of cases where the age or the relationship between the accused and the victim may have been miscoded.



family and non-family related rates of victimizations of older women during this six year period. The ratio of rates between family and non-family victimization have narrowed, from a ratio of 2:1 (non-family rate of 76, versus a family rate of 38) in 1998 which has subsequently narrowed to a ratio of 1.5:1 in 2003 (non-family rate of 68, versus a family rate of 46) (Table 6.5).

### **Servicing the needs of older victims of abuse**

As a result of violence, either initiated by family members or perpetrated by others, a number of victim services have been developed to meet the needs of victims. In order to track the types of victims services offered in Canada the Victims Services Survey was developed. This survey is a census of system-based, police-based and court-based non-residential victim services, sexual assault centres and financial benefit programs for victims of crime. Agencies were asked to state whether or not they offered dedicated programs to specific populations. Results from the survey indicate that just under one third of the 484 agencies surveyed provided programs specifically for seniors (32%). In addition, the survey took note of all victims met on a snapshot day to ascertain the characteristics of the population that were using victim services across Canada. On this snapshot day, 25% of clients served were senior women and 20% of clients were senior men who were victims of some form of crime either family-related or other (Kong, 2004).

A second survey conducted by Statistics Canada provides information on services provided to victims, but focuses specifically on residential services for female victims of spousal violence. The Transition Home Survey collects information from shelters in order to obtain a better understanding of the number of women and children who are escaping abuse. Transition homes are another vehicle that are designed to meet the needs of abused seniors. Of those shelters that responded to the survey, over one third (34%) provided services for older women fleeing an abusive situation (over the age of 55). In addition, on snapshot day, 5% of residents escaping abuse were women over the age of 55 (Taylor-Butts, 2005).

### **Institutional abuse**

The oldest seniors, those over the age of 80, are the segment of the population that is expected to grow the fastest in the coming decade. According to Statistic Canada's estimates, the number of people aged 80 or over is expected to increase by 43%, from 2001 to 2011 (Daily, 2002). Seniors over the age of 80 are the primary population that resides in institutional care and it is expected that the growth of this age group will have an impact on the administration of these institutions. In addition, this is the age group that is most likely to suffer from some form of cognitive impairment, such as Alzheimer's or another form of dementia. Because of the growth of this age group and the demand that they will place on institutions in the coming years the need to understand and monitor abuse in institutions is of great importance.

Current research in the area of institutional care highlights the need to differentiate between two forms of senior abuse which can take place within an institution. One form of abuse is referred to as "systemic abuse" – that is an institution by its very nature and operation is abusive to residents. The second form of senior abuse, more commonly known, includes those acts by an individual that is abusive in nature (World Health Organization, 2002).

#### **Institutional abuse/"systemic abuse" would include:**

- Inadequate provision of care, inadequate nutrition and low standards of nursing care;
- Inappropriate staff-client interactions; lack of communication between residence and staff, culture of aggressiveness;
- Inappropriate institutional environment, overcrowding, lack of privacy, lack of facility maintenance, issues of cleanliness;
- Inappropriate organizational policies, that is institutions which operate on a goal that is in conflict with meeting the health and environmental needs of residents;

To date, within Canada, there has been little research on institutional abuse or neglect of older adults. The research that does exist indicates that senior woman, due to the fact that they tend to live longer and as a result are more likely to reside in an institution are at greater risk of experiencing abuse in an institutional setting.

**Table 6.1**

**Number and proportion of older adult victims of violent crime by sex and relationship of accused to victim, reported to a subset of police departments, 2003<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>**

Relationship of accused to victim	Sex of victim					
	Total		Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total violence against older adults</b>	<b>3,978</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,830</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,148</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total family</b>	<b>1,141</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>20</b>
Current spouse <sup>5</sup>	326	8	240	13	86	4
Ex-spouse	46	1	22	1	24	1
Parent	89	2	45	2	44	2
Adult child	380	10	237	13	143	7
Sibling <sup>6</sup>	151	4	94	5	57	3
Extended family <sup>7</sup>	149	4	76	4	73	3
<b>Total non-family</b>	<b>2,504</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>1,517</b>	<b>71</b>
Close friend	205	5	84	5	121	6
Business relationship	202	5	57	3	145	7
Casual acquaintance	763	19	283	15	480	22
Stranger	1,334	34	563	31	771	36
<b>Unknown<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>333</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>9</b>

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.

2. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.

3. Violent crime includes violations causing death, attempting the commission of a capital crime, sexual assaults, assaults, violations resulting in the deprivation of freedom, and other violations involving violence of the threat of violence.

4. Older adults include all those persons aged 65 years and over (65 to 89).

5. 'Current spouse' includes legally married and common-law partners.

6. 'Sibling' includes natural, step, half, foster or adopted brother or sister.

7. 'Extended family' includes all others related to the victim either by blood or by marriage, e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins and in-laws.

8. 'Unknown' includes cases where the relationship between the victim and the accused is unknown.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

**Table 6.2**

**Number and proportion of older adult victims of violent crime by crime type and family, non-family relationship to accused, reported to a subset of police departments, 2003<sup>1,2,3</sup>**

Type of violent crime	Offences committed by family						Offences committed by non-family					
	Total		Sex of victim		Sex of victim		Total		Sex of victim		Sex of victim	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total violent offences</b>	<b>1,141</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,504</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>987</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,517</b>	<b>100</b>
Sexual assault	6	1	6	1	0	0	71	3	66	7	5	0
Major assault (assault levels 2 & 3)	180	16	95	13	85	20	274	11	72	7	202	13
Common assault (assault level 1)	628	55	409	57	219	51	814	33	261	26	553	36
Robbery	11	1	6	1	5	1	692	28	349	35	343	23
Criminal harassment	49	4	34	5	15	4	127	5	71	7	56	4
Uttering threats	221	19	137	19	84	20	434	17	133	13	301	20
Other violent offences <sup>4</sup>	46	4	27	4	19	4	92	4	35	4	57	4

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.

2. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.

3. 'Older adults' include those aged 65 and older (65 to 89).

4. 'Other violent offences' include unlawfully causing bodily harm, criminal negligence causing bodily harm, other assaults, kidnapping, extortion, hostage-taking, explosives causing death/bodily harm, arson, and other violent violations.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

**Table 6.3****Level of injury against older adult victims of family violence, reported to a subset of police departments, 2003<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>**

Level of injury	Sex of victim					
	Total		Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total violent offences</b>	<b>1,141</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>427</b>	<b>100</b>
No injuries <sup>5</sup>	617	54	375	53	242	57
Minor physical injury	412	36	274	38	138	32
Major physical injury or death	39	3	19	3	20	5
Unknown <sup>6</sup>	63	6	46	6	27	6

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.

2. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police departments representing 61% of the national volume of crime in 2003.

3. Older adults include all those aged 65 and older (65 to 89).

4. Violent crime includes violations causing death, attempting the commission of a capital crime, sexual assaults, assaults, violations resulting in the deprivation of freedom and other violations involving violence or the threat of violence.

5. No injuries includes incidents where the violation did not involve the use of weapons or physical force.

6. Includes incidents where the extent of injuries to the victim could not be determined.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

**Table 6.4****Method of violence causing the most serious injury to the victim in family violence incidents against older adults reported to a subset of police departments, 2003<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>**

Method of violence	Sex of victim					
	Total		Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total older adult victims with injury</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Physical force</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Unknown<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>38</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Weapons</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>22</b>
Firearms	1	0	1	0	0	0
Knife, other piercing/cutting instrument	14	3	6	2	8	5
Club/blunt instrument	19	4	8	3	11	7
Other weapon <sup>6</sup>	30	7	15	5	15	10

**Note:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.

2. Older adults include all those aged 65 and older (65 to 89).

3. Excludes Toronto due to the unavailability of disaggregated data on weapon use.

4. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 121 police departments representing 54% of the national volume of crime in 2003.

5. The weapon was not known, the weapon involved did not cause physical injury, or no weapon was involved in the incident.

6. Other weapons might include vehicles, pepper spray, whips, and other objects that may be used for strangulation.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 6.5

**Trends in violent crime against older adults, by accused-victim relationship, reported to a subset of police departments 1998-2003<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>**

Year	Female victims						Male victims					
	Total		Family <sup>6</sup>		Non-family <sup>7</sup>		Total		Family <sup>6</sup>		Non-family <sup>7</sup>	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
1998	1,208	114	402	38	806	76	1,215	157	229	30	986	128
1999	1,412	130	515	47	897	83	1,353	171	264	33	1,089	137
2000	1,536	139	589	53	947	86	1,531	189	321	40	1,210	149
2001	1,471	131	590	53	881	79	1,548	187	340	41	1,208	146
2002	1,445	127	605	53	840	74	1,543	183	324	38	1,219	144
2003	1,311	114	528	46	783	68	1,548	180	321	37	1,227	142

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.

2. Older adults include all those aged 65 and older (65 to 89).

3. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 71 police departments representing 46% of the national volume of crime in 2003.

4. Violent crime includes violations causing death, attempting the commission of a capital crime, sexual assaults, assaults, violations resulting in the deprivation of freedom, and other violations involving violence or the threat of violence.

5. Rate per 100,000 population aged 65 and older, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.

6. Family includes spouse, ex-spouse, parent, sibling and extended family.

7. Non-family includes close friend, business relationship, casual acquaintance, stranger and unknown.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Trend Database.

## Data sources

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### Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey

The Incident-based Uniform Crime reporting (UCR2) survey collects detailed information on individual criminal incidents reported to police including characteristics of victims, accused persons and incidents. In 2003, detailed data were collected from 122 police services in 9 provinces representing 61% of the national volume of reported actual Criminal Code incidents. Other than Ontario and Quebec, the data are primarily from urban police departments. The reader is cautioned that these data are not geographically representative at the national or provincial level.

The UCR2 Trend Database contains historical data that permits the analysis of trends in the characteristics of incidents, accused and victims, such as the victim-accused relationship. This database currently includes 71 police services that have reported to the UCR2 Survey consistently since 1998. These respondents accounted for 46% of the national volume of crime in 2003.

### General Social Survey on Victimization

In 2004, the victimization cycle of the General Social Survey (GSS) was conducted for the fourth time. Previous victimization cycles were conducted in 1988, 1993, and 1999. The target population included all non-institutionalized people aged 15 and older (i.e., individuals living in households). Households without non-cellular telephones were excluded from the survey. This exclusion represents a small proportion (2%) of the population.

Data were collected each month from January 2004 to December 2004. Over this period, a total of approximately 24,000 people were successfully interviewed using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI), yielding a response rate of 75%. Some types of non-responses included respondents who refused to participate, those who could not be reached, or individuals who could not speak English or French well enough to complete the survey.

It is important to acknowledge that there are limitations to the data. The data that appear in the report are based on

estimates from a sample of the Canadian population and are therefore subject to sampling error. This type of error refers to the difference between an estimate derived from the sample and the one that would have been obtained from a census that used the same procedure to collect data from every person in the population.

In addition, there is the possibility of non-sampling errors. These refer to such issues as the respondents' inability to remember/report events accurately, refusal by respondents to report, and errors in coding and processing of data.

Using the 2004 GSS sample design and sample size, an estimate of a given proportion of the total population, expressed as a percentage, is expected to be within one percentage point of the true proportion 19 times out of 20.

### Homicide Survey

The Homicide survey began collecting police-reported data on homicide incidents, victims and accused persons in Canada in 1961 and began collecting data on family-related homicides in 1974. Whenever a homicide becomes known to police, the investigating police department completes a survey questionnaire, which is then forwarded to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. The count for a particular year represents all homicides reported in that year, regardless of when the death actually occurred. In 1991 and 1997, the survey was revised and expanded to include additional variables, such as previous conviction histories of the accused and victim, employment of the accused and victim, victim's use of force at the time of the incident, and Shaken Baby Syndrome as a cause of death.

The Homicide Survey also contains a narrative section, where investigating officers insert additional details on the homicide that are not included in the questionnaire portion of the survey. These additional details include such information as the presence/absence of a restraining order and the attempted suicide of the accused. However, generalizations cannot be made to all homicides, since the availability of this supplementary information varies between homicide reports.

## Definitions

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**Assault** refers to three levels of physical assaults which include the following categories:

- **Common assault**, (section 265). This includes the Criminal Code category assault (level 1). This is the least serious form of assault and includes pushing, slapping, punching, and face-to-face verbal threats.
- **Major assault levels 2 and 3**, (sections 267, 268). This includes more serious forms of assault, i.e. assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2) and aggravated assault (level 3). Assault level 2 involves carrying, using or threatening to use a weapon against someone or causing someone bodily harm. Assault level 3 involves wounding, maiming, disfiguring or endangering the life of someone.

**Criminal Harassment, (section 264.1)** is defined as repeatedly following another person from place to place or repeatedly attempting to contact the person against their wishes causing that person to reasonably fear for their personal safety or the safety of anyone known to them.

**Family and non-family** - The nature of the relationship between the victim and the accused is determined by establishing the identity of the accused relative to the victim. Family members include spouses, children, siblings, parents or other persons related to the victim by blood, marriage or another legal relationship (e.g. adoption). All other relationships are considered to be non-family.

**Homicide** includes first and second degree murder, manslaughter and infanticide. Deaths caused by criminal negligence, suicide, accidental or justifiable homicides are not included in this classification.

**Major injuries** are those that require professional medical treatment or immediate transportation to a medical facility.

**Minor injuries** are defined as those that do not require professional medical treatment or only some first aid.

**Older adults and seniors** are used interchangeably in this report and refer to Canadians aged 65 years or older.

**Sexual assault** encompasses a wide range of criminal acts in the Criminal Code of Canada. Such conduct ranges from unwanted sexual touching to sexual violence resulting in serious physical injury or disfigurement to the victim. It also includes special categories of offences designed to protect children from sexual abuse.

- **Sexual assault level 1**, (section 271). This involves minor physical injuries or no injuries to the victim.
- **Sexual assault level 2**, (section 272). This includes sexual assault with a weapon, threats or causing bodily harm.
- **Aggravated sexual assault level 3**, (section 273). This results in wounding, maiming, disfiguring or endangering the life of the victim.
- **Other sexual offences** include a group of offences that are primarily meant to address incidents of sexual abuse directed at children. The Criminal Code offences that are included in this category are :
  - Sexual interference (Section 151) – is the direct or indirect touching (for a sexual purpose) of a person under the age of 14 years using a part of the body or an object.
  - Invitation to sexual touching (Section 152) – is the inviting, counseling, or inciting of a person under the age of 14 years to touch (for a sexual purpose) the body of any person directly or indirectly with a part of the body or with an object.
  - Sexual exploitation (Section 153) – occurs when a person in a position of trust or authority towards a young person or a person with whom the young person is in a relationship of dependency, commits sexual interference or invitation to sexual touching. In this section “young person” refers to a person between 14 and 18 years of age.
  - Incest (Section 155) – occurs when an individual has sexual intercourse with a person that has a known defined blood relationship with them.
  - Anal intercourse (Section 159) and Bestiality (Section 160) are also included in this category of offences. These offences may be directed at children, but not always.

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