

# Violent victimization of women with disabilities, 2014

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Canadians with a disability—both women and men—were almost twice as likely to be victims of a violent crime than Canadians who did not have a disability, according to the 2014 General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization).

An in-depth analysis of violent victimization experiences, victim and incident characteristics, and spousal violence experiences among women and men with a disability is now available in the *Juristat* article "[Violent victimization of women with disabilities, 2014](#)."

Roughly 3.8 million Canadians reported being limited in their daily activities due to a hearing, vision, pain, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, learning, developmental, memory, or mental or psychological health-related disability, according to the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability. Disabilities related to pain, flexibility, and mobility were the most common. Mental health-related, dexterity, and hearing disabilities were the next most commonly reported, followed by seeing, learning, and memory disabilities. Overall, persons with a disability made up 13.7% of the Canadian population 15 years of age and older.

## Nearly 4 in 10 incidents of violent crime involve a victim with a disability

In 2014, persons with a disability were overrepresented as victims of violent crime. Overall, nearly 4 in 10 (39%) incidents of self-reported violent crime—that is, sexual assault, robbery, or physical assault—involved a victim with a disability. In 45% of all violent incidents involving a female victim, the victim had a disability. When looking at male victims of violence, one-third of incidents involved a male with a disability.

## Canadians with mental health-related disabilities report highest rates of violent victimization

Rates of violent victimization were higher among women and men with a disability, regardless of the type of disability. In particular, women and men with cognitive disabilities or mental-health related disabilities were victimized nearly four times more often than their counterparts who did not have a disability.

See chart "[Self-reported violent victimization of Canadians with a disability, by type of disability and sex, Canada, 2014](#)."

## Rates of sexual assault higher among women with mental health-related or cognitive disabilities

According to both self-reported and police-reported data, the large majority of victims of sexual assault are women (87% of self-reported incidents in 2014, and 87% of police-reported sexual assaults from 2009 to 2014). This pattern is also evident when looking at the population with a disability who were victims of self-reported sexual assault, as nearly 9 in 10 (88%) victims were women.

Women with a mental health-related disability (131 per 1,000) or a cognitive disability (121 per 1,000) were more likely to report having been a victim of sexual assault, compared with women without a disability (29 per 1,000).

## Close to one in three violent incidents against persons with a disability occur in their own home

Canadians with a disability (30% of incidents) were more likely to be victimized in their own home, compared with Canadians who did not report a disability (17% of incidents). It should be noted that the population living in institutions, such as residential care facilities and other collective dwellings, are excluded from the General Social Survey and their experiences are therefore not measured or included in this finding.



In terms of the relationship to the person responsible, women with a disability and women without a disability were similar: the perpetrator was most often a friend, acquaintance, or neighbour. Men with a disability were more likely than men without a disability to have been victimized by a friend, acquaintance, or neighbour, but less likely to have been victimized by a stranger.

## Physical and emotional consequences of victimization more commonly reported among those with a disability

Victims of violent crime who had a disability contacted or used a victims' service in about 1 in 5 (22%) incidents, compared with nearly 1 in 10 (9%) incidents where the victim did not have a disability. Women with disabilities were more than twice as likely as their male counterparts to contact or use victims' services following an incident of violent victimization (27% versus 13%).

Women with a disability who had been victimized were more likely to be physically injured and to have their daily activities affected as a result of their victimization. Close to 3 in 10 (28%) women who had a disability and were a victim of violent crime reported that they were physically injured as a result of the incident, compared with just over 1 in 10 female victims of violent crime who did not have a disability (11%). Women with a disability were also more likely to have difficulty with their everyday activities as a consequence of their victimization (38%, versus 24% among women without a disability).

## Spousal violence against persons with a disability

Physical or sexual violence committed by a current or former spouse or common-law partner was more common among persons with a disability compared with those without a disability. The proportion of women with a disability who were victimized by their spouse in the past five years was more than twice as high as the proportion of women without a disability (6.2% versus 2.7%). Men with a disability were more likely (5.6%) to have experienced spousal violence in the past five years, than were men without a disability (3.8%).

Among women who were victims of spousal violence, close to 4 in 10 (38%) with a disability reported that they feared for their life due to their partner's or ex-partner's violence. This proportion was higher than the 26% of women without a disability, and well above the 14% of men with a disability who feared for their life due to spousal violence.

### Note to readers

*The 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) identified persons with a disability using the Disability Screening Questions module, which classifies a respondent as having a disability if their daily activities are sometimes, often, or always limited by difficulties related to hearing, vision, pain, mobility, flexibility, dexterity, learning, developmental, memory, or mental or psychological health.*

*Previous cycles of the GSS on Victimization used a different set of questions to identify persons with a disability. As such, data on persons with a disability cannot be compared between the 2014 cycle and that of previous cycles.*

*The target population of the 2014 GSS consisted of people aged 15 years and older in the provinces and territories, and excluded people living full time in institutions, such as prisons, residential care facilities, shelters, and other collective dwellings from its sampling frame. According to the 2016 Census of Population, there were just over 509,000 persons living in a healthcare or related facility. While not all persons living in such facilities have a disability, many of these collective dwellings are either specifically geared towards persons with a disability or are aimed at parts of the population that are more likely to include persons with a disability (i.e., older Canadians).*

*Information about non spousal violence (criminal incidents committed by family members (other than spouses), friends, acquaintances, neighbours, strangers, or other perpetrators) is collected by incident, whereas information about spousal violence—incidents perpetrated by a current or former spouse or common law partner—is collected as a grouping of incidents by victim and may include multiple different incidents or types of violence. Spousal violence often involves repeated victimization and it would therefore be too burdensome to ask victims to recall each incident they experienced. Using GSS data, it is not possible to provide details about a specific incident of spousal violence.*

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [4504](#).**

The article "[Violent victimization of women with disabilities, 2014](#)," from the publication *Juristat* ([85-002-X](#)), is now available.

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).