

More than half of people living in the territories reported physical or sexual assault since the age of 15

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More than half of women (52%) and men (54%) in Canada's territories have been victims of at least one sexual or physical assault since the age of 15. However, women were three times more likely than men to have been sexually assaulted at least once since the age of 15.

In 2018, the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS) was conducted to find out more about gender-based violence. Gender-based violence—defined as violence that is committed against someone based on their gender identity, gender expression or perceived gender—encompasses a broad range of behaviours, from those that are not necessarily criminal (such as unwanted sexual attention while in public) to those that are classified as criminal acts (such as sexual and physical assault).

Although these data were collected before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the results of recent surveys show that issues of violence continue to be a concern for many Canadians. For example, a crowdsourcing survey conducted at the beginning of the pandemic found that 1 in 10 women reported being very or extremely concerned about the potential of violence in the home.

Detailed results from the SSPPS are released today in the *Juristat* article entitled "[Gender-based violence: Sexual and physical assaults in Canada's territories, 2018](#)" and in data tables available online. These results exclude intimate partner violence, which will be analyzed at a later time.

Women are more than three times more likely than men to be sexually assaulted in their lifetime

In the territories, just over half of women (52%) and men (54%) have been victims of sexual or physical assault at least once since age 15, while 7.8% of both women and men had been victims in the 12 months preceding the survey.

In contrast, these proportions were lower in the provinces: 39% of women and 35% of men reported having been assaulted at least once since age 15, while 4.4% of women and 4.3% of men had been assaulted in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Women living in the territories were much more likely than men to have been sexually assaulted. Specifically, women were more than three times more likely to have been sexually assaulted at least once since age 15 (39% compared with 12%) and six times more likely to have been sexually assaulted in the 12 months preceding the survey (3.6% compared with 0.6%).

LGBTQ2+ women (63%), women who experienced childhood violence (62%) and women with a physical or mental disability (51%) were among those most likely to report having been sexually assaulted since the age of 15.

Some people who identify with multiple population groups have experienced relatively high rates of violent victimization. For example, 75% of LGBTQ2+ people with a disability had been sexually or physically assaulted since age 15, compared with less than half (45%) of non-LGBTQ2+ people with no disabilities. Similarly, almost two-thirds (64%) of First Nations women with a disability had been sexually assaulted at least once since age 15, compared with just over one-third (38%) of non-Indigenous women with no physical or mental disability.



The highest prevalence of violent victimization since age 15 was observed in Yukon, and the lowest in Nunavut

Among the three territories, women and men in Yukon were most likely to report having been sexually or physically assaulted at least once since age 15. In particular, just over 6 in 10 women (61%) and men (61%) experienced at least one sexual or physical assault since age 15.

In the Northwest Territories, 52% of women and 55% of men reported having been sexually or physically assaulted since the age of 15. Nunavut had the lowest prevalence of violent victimization: 42% of women and 46% of men in that territory reported having been sexually or physically assaulted since age 15.

In Nunavut, the prevalence of assault was relatively low in the smallest communities. In the largest communities such as Iqaluit (58%) or Rankin Inlet (56%), the prevalence of violent victimization was relatively similar to what was observed for the territories as a whole. In contrast, in the other smaller communities, just over one-third (37%) reported having been sexually or physically assaulted at least once since age 15.

A majority of Inuit live in Nunavut's smaller communities and, incidentally, the prevalence of violent victimization since age 15 reported by Inuit women (41%) and men (42%) is lower than for non-Indigenous people (56% of women and 58% of men). Some studies have suggested a normalization of violence among some Inuit women as a result of intergenerational violence and trauma resulting from colonization and experiences at Indigenous residential schools, which could have led to underreporting of violent victimization among those women.

First Nations women (60%) and men (66%) and Métis women (51%) and men (45%) living in the territories reported having been sexually or physically assaulted at least once since age 15 in relatively similar proportions to non-Indigenous people.

Overall, roughly half of Indigenous women (48%) and men (50%) in the territories reported having been a victim of assault at least once since age 15, proportions similar to those reported by Indigenous people living in the provinces (55% of women and 55% of men).

In contrast, the proportions of non-Indigenous people who have experienced at least one sexual or physical assault since age 15 were much lower in the provinces (38% of women and 35% of men) than in the territories (56% of women and 58% of men).

More than one-quarter of women who have been sexually assaulted at least once since age 15 consider their mental health to be poor or fair

Territory residents who had been sexually or physically assaulted at least once since age 15 were more likely to report facing certain health issues, using alcohol or drugs, or having been homeless. For example, just over one-quarter of women who had been sexually assaulted (27%) or physically assaulted (27%) rated their mental health as fair or poor, compared with 10% of women who had never been assaulted. Similarly, more than one-third of female victims of sexual assault (34%) or physical assault (35%) reported having been homeless, compared with 14% of women who have never been assaulted.

However, it should be noted that these data cannot establish a causal link. It is impossible to determine whether victimization experiences are the cause of other social or health issues (e.g., using alcohol or drugs to cope with the experiences of violence), whether these issues may contribute to greater exposure to violence, or whether victimization and social or health issues share the same causes.

Women in the territories are most often physically assaulted in a private residence, usually by a man they know acting alone

A private residence or the surrounding area was the location of the most serious assault for 43% of women who had been physically assaulted in the 12 months preceding the survey. Other locations mentioned included the street or another public place (23%) and a commercial or institutional establishment (19%).

In most cases, both women and men were assaulted by a man and, in general, that person acted alone. Just over half (53%) of men who had been physically assaulted said they had been assaulted by someone they did not know or knew by sight only.

Conversely, women were less likely to be targeted by strangers: 34% of female victims of physical assault and 42% of female victims of sexual assault in the 12 months preceding the survey reported that the most serious assault had been committed by someone they did not know or knew by sight only.

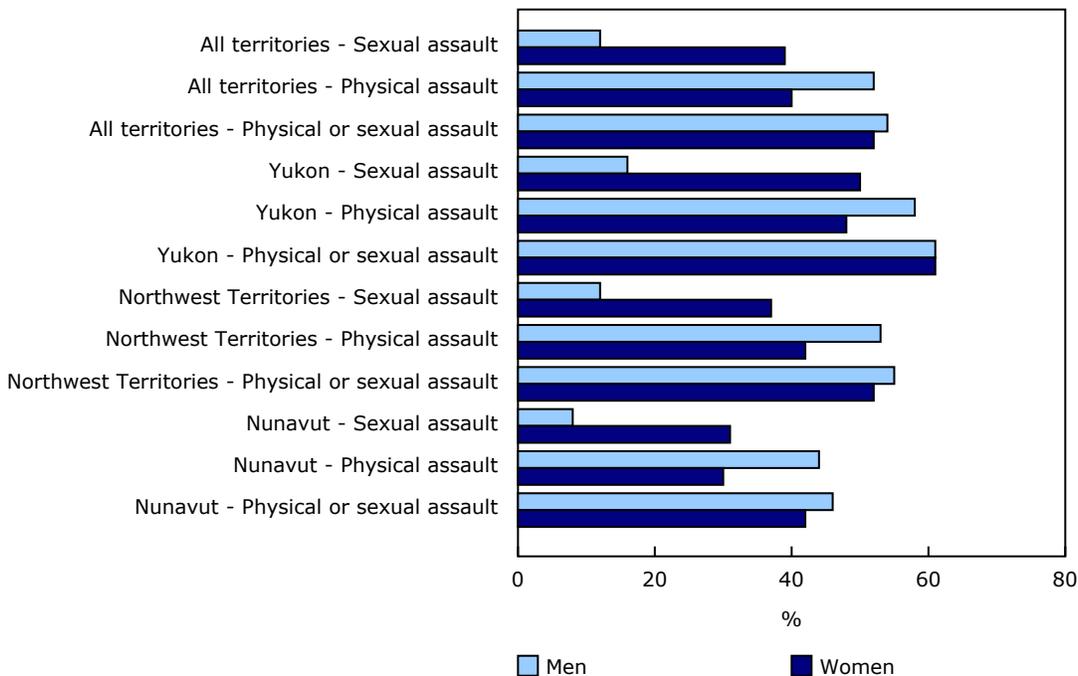
One in eight sexual assaults were reported to the police

The majority of residents of the territories who had been assaulted in the 12 months preceding the survey said that the most serious assault had not been reported to the police. About one-third of physical assault victims (39% of women and 32% of men) reported that the police became aware of the most serious assault. Among sexual assault victims, however, this proportion fell to 13%.

Aside from the police, most women who experienced physical assault (94%) or sexual assault (82%), as well as most men who experienced physical assault (88%), said they had talked to at least one other person (either a family member, a friend or another person) about the most serious assault. Women who experienced sexual assault were much more likely to confide in a friend (64%) than in a family member (36%) or another person (27%).

Victim blaming, or being made to feel responsible for one's own victimization, is sometimes referred to as "secondary victimization." In total, one in five (20%) women who experienced sexual assault reported that someone made them feel responsible for their own victimization. In comparison, 29% of women who experienced physical assault and 16% of men who experienced physical assault said the same.

Chart 1
Violent victimization since age 15, by territory and gender, 2018



Note(s): Excludes intimate partner violence; those results will be published at a later date. The territory refers to the respondent's current territory of residence; therefore, the data presented for one territory may include victimization experiences that occurred in other provinces or territories. Percentage calculations include missing or unspecified responses, but these data are not shown unless they represent 5% or more of the total responses.

Source(s): Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (5256).

Note to readers

This Juristat article is based on the results of the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS) conducted in the territories in 2018. Data collection and enhancing knowledge about gender-based violence is a central component of It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence. For this federal strategy, the SSPPS collected information on the experiences of territory residents with unwanted behaviours and violent victimization. The SSPPS was also conducted in the provinces, and those results were published in late 2019 in the Juristat article "[Gender-based violence and unwanted sexual behaviour in Canada, 2018: Initial findings from the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces.](#)"

Future reports will be able to combine the provincial and territorial results to provide Canada-wide findings.

The development and collection of the SSPPS and the analysis of its results were funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada.

The analysis was based on the respondent's gender, which was determined using the response to the question on whether they were male, female, or gender diverse. A dedicated analysis of transgender, gender diverse, and sexual minority populations is planned for a forthcoming article.

Since the survey asked broadly about all experiences of violence, and not only those that were perceived to be gender-based, key gender differences in the prevalence, nature, and impact of unwanted behaviours and violent victimization were analyzed to examine gender-based violence in Canada.

The LGBTQ2+ population includes persons who reported a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, transgender persons, as well as two-spirited persons insofar as they indicated two-spiritedness to the sexual orientation question. The LGBTQ2+ population was derived from three questions on sex at birth, gender identity (with a fill-in answer option), and sexual orientation (with a fill-in answer option). Although the acronyms 2SLGBTQ2+ and 2SLGBTQQIA are sometimes used to identify this population, the acronym LGBTQ2+ is used in this report for consistency with other Statistics Canada reports.

The Indigenous population was identified using the following question: "Are you an Indigenous person, that is, First Nations, Métis or Inuit (Inuit)?" In this article, the term "Indigenous" is used to refer to all First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Where possible, results are presented for each distinct group.

Available tables: [35-10-0166-01](#) to [35-10-0168-01](#) .

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5256](#).

The article "[Gender-based violence: Sexual and physical assaults in Canada's territories, 2018](#)" is now available as part of the publication *Juristat* ([85-002-X](#)).

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) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca).