

# Family Violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2019

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## Police-reported family violence increases for the third year in a row

Rates of police-reported family violence against children and youth, intimate partners, and seniors all rose in 2019. The overall rate of police-reported family violence increased for the third consecutive year, rising 13% over this period. This follows a long span of decline, with the rate falling by almost one-fifth (-19%) from 2009 to 2016.

Today, Statistics Canada released the *Juristat* article, "[Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2019](#)," which presents an overview of police-reported family violence against children and youth, intimate partners, and seniors.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada brought lockdown measures, school closures and job losses for many, raising concerns about the impact of these stressors on families and a possible increase in family violence.

While the latest annual police-reported data on family violence predate the pandemic, they are critical in establishing a baseline for future analysis of how COVID-19 restrictions impacted Canadian families.

Statistics Canada has also launched an initiative to collect data on selected types of crime during the first eight months of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide insight into crime during this period.

According to previously released data from 19 police services across Canada, selected criminal incidents were 18% lower overall from March to October 2020, compared with the same period in 2019. Family-related physical assault (-4%) and sexual assault (-10%) were also lower during the first eight months of the pandemic, albeit to a lesser extent, while family-related incidents of uttering threats rose 2%.

These data represent incidents that came to the attention of police. However, many victims might have been unable to seek help; incidents of family violence that are normally suspected or witnessed by a third party (such as friends and teachers) and reported to police are more likely to have gone undetected during the pandemic.

## One-quarter of victims of police-reported violence are victimized by a family member

There were approximately 400,000 victims of police-reported violent crime in Canada in 2019. Of these, one-quarter (26%, or more than 100,000 people) were victimized by a family member—that is, a spouse, parent, child, sibling or extended family member perpetrated the violence.

Women and girls accounted for two-thirds (67%) of all victims of family violence in 2019. Women and girls also accounted for over half of child and youth (57%) and senior (58%) victims of family violence, and almost four-fifths of all victims of intimate partner violence (79%).

Family violence that came to the attention of police was most often perpetrated by a current spouse (31%) or a parent (20%), followed by a former spouse (13%), a sibling (11%) or the victim's child (11%).

## Physical assault most common type of family violence reported to police

Physical assault was the most common type of family violence, affecting 7 in 10 (71%) victims. More than half (54%) of child and youth victims of family violence were physically assaulted, as were about three-quarters of senior (72%) and intimate partner (75%) victims of violence.

Child and youth, intimate partner, and senior victims of family violence all experienced higher rates of physical assault than other types of violence. There was one exception: girls aged 17 and younger experienced a slightly higher rate of sexual offences—including sexual assault and sexual violations against children—than physical assault (170 versus 167 per 100,000 population).



The types of family violence experienced by women and girls also differed compared with men and boys. For example, the rate of physical assault was notably higher for girls and women (249 versus 146 per 100,000 population), while the rate of other offences involving violence or the threat of violence (70 versus 30) for girls and women was over double that for boys and men.

Consistent with crime in general, the rate of sexual offences was over 5.5 times higher among women and girls compared with men and boys (48 versus 9).

## Saskatchewan and Manitoba have highest provincial rates of police-reported family violence

Similar to police-reported crime in general, rates of police-reported family violence were highest in Saskatchewan (519 per 100,000 population) and Manitoba (417) among the provinces. Conversely, rates were lowest in Ontario (173), Prince Edward Island (203) and Nova Scotia (225).

The rates were notably higher in the territories, with Nunavut reporting the highest rate of family violence (3,398), followed by the Northwest Territories (2,689) and Yukon (707).

Women and girls experienced a higher rate of family violence than men and boys in every province and territory. The largest differences in rates were in Ontario (239 versus 106), the Northwest Territories (3,739 versus 1,696) and Quebec (478 versus 232), where women and girls experienced family violence at rates more than double those among men and boys.

### Note to readers

*Family violence refers to violence committed by spouses (legally married, separated, divorced and common-law), parents (biological, step, adoptive and foster), children (biological, step, adopted and foster), siblings (biological, step, half, adopted and foster) and extended family members (e.g., grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and in-laws). Intimate partner violence refers to violence committed by current and former legally married spouses, common-law partners, dating partners and other intimate partners.*

*In the coming months, the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics at Statistics Canada will release a series of analytical reports about intimate partner violence based on self-reported data from the 2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces. The series will include a report dedicated to an overview of intimate partner violence, and additional reports profiling intimate partner violence among Indigenous women, ethnocultural minority women, women with disabilities, young women, and sexual minority women and men.*

*For more information about selected types of police-reported crime during the first eight months of the COVID-19 pandemic, see "Selected police-reported crime and calls for service during the COVID-19 pandemic, March 2020 to October 2020."*

### Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3302](#), [3315](#) and [5256](#).

The article "[Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2019](#)" 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](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)).