

Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Monday, April 26, 2021

More than 4 in 10 women have experienced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime

In 2018, 44% of women—who had ever been in an intimate partner relationship—reported experiencing some form of psychological, physical, or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. By comparison, this was the case for just over one-third (36%) of men.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a form of gender-based violence, and encompasses a broad range of behaviours including emotional, psychological, financial, physical and sexual abuse committed by a current or former spouse, common-law partner, or dating partner.

As part of the federal government strategy, *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*, the Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS) collected information on Canadians' experiences of IPV. Today's release examines lifetime experiences of IPV and experiences in the 12 months preceding the survey, and explores the experiences of sexual minority women, sexual minority men, and women with disabilities.

These data were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore do not reflect possible increases in IPV that could have been brought about by the pandemic lockdowns and restrictions. However, early indicators—such as a [crowdsourcing survey](#) conducted at the beginning of the pandemic—found that 10% of women and 6% of men reported being very concerned or extremely concerned about the potential of violence in the home.

Women 6 times more likely than men to have been sexually assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetime

Overall, lifetime experiences of IPV are relatively common among both women and men. However, for each type of violence examined, women were proportionately more likely than men to have been abused and this was especially true for sexual violence. More precisely, psychological abuse (that is, emotional, psychological and financial abuse), the most common type of lifetime IPV, was reported by more than 4 in 10 (43%) women and just over one-third (35%) of men. Almost one-quarter (23%) of women reported experiencing physical assault, compared to 17% of men. Most notably, women were 6 times more likely than men to have been sexually assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetime (12% versus 2%).

Significantly higher proportions of women experience the most severe forms of intimate partner violence

There were several forms of IPV that were more than 5 times more prevalent among women than men, and these forms of violence tended to be the most severe. Although these acts of violence were less common, women were considerably more likely to have experienced the following in their lifetime: being forced to have sex (10% versus 2%), being made to perform sex acts they did not want to perform (8% versus 1%), and being choked (7% versus 1%).

Risk of intimate partner violence varies across populations

People from some population groups report higher-than-average rates of IPV. Sexual minority people—those whose sexual orientation is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or another sexual orientation that is not heterosexual—are much more likely to experience all forms of intimate partner violence than heterosexual people. In 2018, two-thirds (67%) of sexual minority women had experienced at least one type of IPV since the age of 15. This was significantly higher than the 44% of heterosexual women who reported similar experiences. When broken down by sexual orientation, relatively similar proportions of bisexual (68%) and lesbian (61%) women said that they had experienced some form of IPV in their lifetime, though both were significantly more likely to experience IPV than heterosexual women.

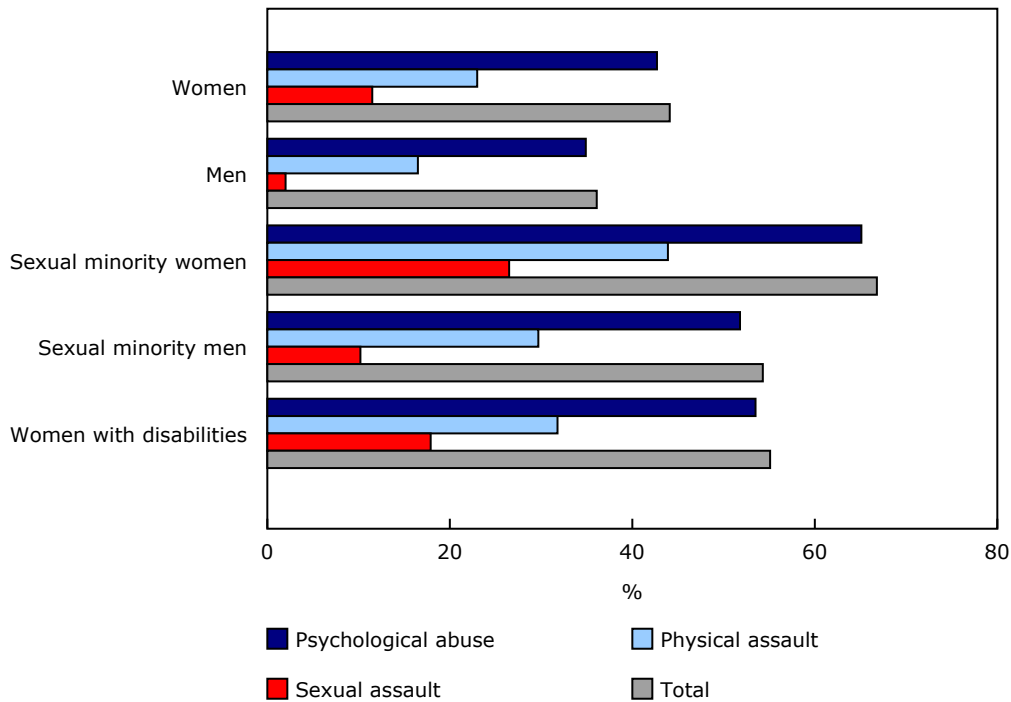


More than one-quarter (27%) of sexual minority women reported being sexually assaulted by an intimate partner at some point since age 15 compared with 11% of heterosexual women.

As was the case among sexual minority women, sexual minority men were much more likely than heterosexual men to experience both physical and sexual assault by an intimate partner over their lifetime. About one-third (31%) of sexual minority men indicated that they had been either physically or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner since age 15 compared with 17% of heterosexual men.

More than half (55%) of women with disabilities experienced some form of IPV in their lifetime, compared with 37% of women without disabilities. The most commonly reported form of IPV among women with disabilities was psychological abuse (53%), followed by physical abuse (32%) and sexual assault (18%). Of note, the SSPPS found that having more than one disability increased the risk of experiencing IPV.

Chart 1
Experiences of intimate partner violence since age 15, Canada, 2018



Note(s): Includes violence committed by a current or former spouse, common-law partner, dating partner, or someone with whom the victim was in another type of intimate relationship. Percent calculation excludes respondents who reported that they have never been in an intimate partner relationship.
Source(s): Statistics Canada, Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (5256).

Higher rates of IPV among sexual minorities and women with disabilities were also noted when looking at 12-month prevalence—2 sexual minority women in 10 (20%), about 2 sexual minority men in 10 (21%) and 16% of women with disabilities reported experiencing IPV in the 12 months preceding the survey. By comparison, among the total population, just over 1 in 10 (12%) women experienced IPV in the previous year—a proportion similar to that of men (11%).

More than one-quarter of intimate partner violence victims experience violence or abuse each month or more—and 1 in 10 women victims experience it almost daily

In addition to asking about experiences of IPV, the survey also examined the frequency and consequences of the violence. The survey found that IPV tends to happen repeatedly: relatively few (19%) victims said that the violence happened once in the past 12 months. Among victims of IPV, 30% of women and 27% of men said that they had experienced at least one type of IPV (psychological, physical or sexual abuse) repeatedly, that is, either on a monthly basis or more often. Further, more than 1 in 10 (12%) female victims of IPV reported experiencing at least one abusive behaviour on a daily basis in the past 12 months. This was the case for a smaller proportion of male victims (6%).

Women who were victims of intimate partner violence were more likely to experience fear, anxiety and feelings of being controlled or trapped by a partner

Measures of intimate partner violence often take into account the levels of fear victims experience. Being afraid of a partner can indicate that experiences of violence are more coercive, relatively more severe, and more likely to reflect a pattern of behaviour by an abusive partner. Fear is considerably more common among women who experience IPV—nearly 4 in 10 (37%) women who were IPV victims said that they were afraid of a partner at some point in their life because of their experiences, well above the proportion of men (9%). The type of IPV experienced is associated with the likelihood of experiencing fear. Among victims of IPV who experienced solely psychological forms of abuse, 12% of women and 4% of men stated that they had been afraid of a partner. By contrast, 55% of women who experienced physical or sexual IPV feared a partner at some point, as did 14% of men. Additionally, more than half (57%) of women and over one-third (36%) of men reported feeling anxious or on edge due to the violence, while 43% of women and 24% of men reported feeling controlled or trapped by an intimate partner.

Note to readers

These reports are based on the results of the 2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS). The SSPPS collected information on Canadians' experiences of intimate partner violence (IPV) since age 15 and in the 12 months preceding the survey.

IPV is defined as any abusive act or behaviour committed by a current or former intimate partner, including spouses, common-law partners, dating partners and other intimate partner relationships. In these reports, intimate partner violence is broadly categorized into three types: psychological violence, physical violence, and sexual violence.

***Psychological violence** encompasses forms of abuse that target a person's emotional, mental, or financial well-being, or impede their personal freedom or sense of safety. This category includes 15 specific types of abuse, including jealousy, name-calling and other put-downs, stalking or harassing behaviours, manipulation, confinement, or property damage. This category also includes being blamed for causing the abusive or violent behaviour, which was measured among those respondents who experienced certain forms of IPV.*

***Physical violence** includes forms of abuse that involve physical assault or the threat of physical assault. In all, nine types of abuse are included in this category, including items being thrown at the victim, being threatened with a weapon, being slapped, being beaten, and being choked.*

***Sexual violence** includes sexual assault or threats of sexual assault and being made to perform sex acts that the victim did not want to perform, and forcing or attempting to force the victim to have sex.*

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

Table 1
Experiences of intimate partner violence in the 12 months preceding the survey, Canada, 2018

	Women	Men	Sexual minority women	Sexual minority men	Women with disabilities
	%				
Total	12.1	11.4	19.6	20.6	16.3
Type of victimization					
Psychological abuse	11.9	11.2	19.4	20.6	15.9
Physical assault	2.4	2.8	6.7	4.7	3.5
Sexual assault	1.2	0.4	4.1	F	2.2

F too unreliable to be published

Note(s): Includes violence committed by a current or former spouse, common-law partner, dating partner, or someone with whom the victim was in another type of intimate relationship. Percent calculation excludes respondents who reported that they have never been in an intimate partner relationship.

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

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5256.

The *Juristat* articles "Intimate partner violence in Canada, 2018: An overview," "Intimate partner violence: Experiences of sexual minority men in Canada, 2018," "Intimate partner violence: Experiences of sexual minority women in Canada, 2018" and "Intimate partner violence: Experiences of women with disabilities in Canada, 2018" are 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).