

# Intimate partner violence among diverse populations in Canada, 2018

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Wednesday, May 19, 2021

---

## More than 6 in 10 Indigenous women have been physically or sexually assaulted during their lifetime

Data from the 2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces show that Indigenous women face disproportionate levels of violence—more than 6 in 10 (63%) have been physically or sexually assaulted at some point since the age of 15, compared with more than 4 in 10 non-Indigenous women (45%). This violence includes acts that were committed within and outside intimate partner relationships.

Intimate partner violence—that is, violence committed by a current or former legally married or common-law spouse, or dating partner—is a central component in understanding the scope of gender-based violence. Beyond physical and sexual assault, intimate partner violence also encompasses a range of harmful behaviours and actions, some of which are not necessarily criminal in nature but nevertheless have both short- and long-term consequences for victims.

As part of the federal government strategy *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence*, information was collected in 2018 on Canadians' experiences of intimate partner violence. Today's release examines experiences of intimate partner violence among First Nations, Métis and Inuit women; young women; and visible minority women.

These results are summarized here, while the full reports include a more detailed analysis of disaggregated data. [Past reports in this series](#) focused on the overall Canadian population, sexual minority women, sexual minority men, and women with disabilities.

These data were collected before the COVID-19 pandemic; therefore, they do not reflect any changes in prevalence or risk of intimate partner violence among certain groups that may have been brought about by the pandemic and its accompanying lockdowns and restrictions. Some early indicators, such as the results of a crowdsourcing survey conducted at the beginning of the pandemic, showed that 10% of women and 6% of men were very or extremely concerned about the potential of violence in the home.

## Six in ten Indigenous women experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime

Intergenerational trauma resulting from colonization remains present in the lives of many Indigenous people. The enduring negative consequences of historical trauma, discrimination and violence rooted in colonialism in Canada, such as the *Indian Act*, the sixties scoop and residential schools, may further influence Indigenous women's disproportionate risk of intimate partner violence—and other types of violence—later in life. For additional information and context on these issues, consult *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.

In all, about 6 in 10 First Nations (59%) and Métis (64%) women stated that they had experienced some form of psychological, physical or sexual abuse committed by an intimate partner in their lifetime, as did 44% of Inuit women. Taken together, this represented 61% of all Indigenous women.

Generally, psychological violence was the most common type of intimate partner violence reported by First Nations, Métis and Inuit women, followed by physical violence and sexual violence. Overall, 60% of Indigenous women reported having experienced psychological violence, 44% had experienced physical violence, and just over one in five (21%) had been sexually abused by a partner in their lifetime.

In addition, looking at the intersection of multiple characteristics helps to better understand and further contextualize the risk of people or groups of people experiencing violence. For example, nearly 9 in 10 Indigenous women with a minority sexual identity (e.g., lesbian, gay or bisexual) (86%) had experienced intimate partner violence in their



---

lifetime, compared with 59% of heterosexual Indigenous women. Likewise, Indigenous women with a disability were more likely to have been victims of intimate partner violence than Indigenous women who did not have a disability (74% versus 46%).

## One in six Indigenous women experienced intimate partner violence in the 12 months preceding the survey

Not only was the prevalence of intimate partner violence higher among Indigenous women over their lifetime, it was also higher in the 12-month period preceding the survey. In 2018, one in six Indigenous women (17%) had experienced some form of intimate partner violence in the past 12 months, compared with 12% of non-Indigenous women.

## Lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence varies across ethnocultural groups

The population designated as a visible minority in Canada comprises a wide range of ethnocultural groups, and the experiences of any particular group can vary greatly. Among specific ethnocultural groups, Arab (44%), Black (42%) and Latin American (47%) women were more likely to have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15 when compared with the overall population designated as a visible minority (29%). In contrast, Chinese (23%) and Filipino (18%) women were less likely than visible minority women in general to have experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime.

## Women aged 15 to 24 years report higher rates of intimate partner violence over the 12 months preceding the survey

Among young women (those aged 15 to 24 years), almost 3 in 10 (29%) experienced some form of intimate partner violence in the 12 months preceding the survey, about three times higher than the proportion observed among women aged 25 and older (10%).

Specifically, when compared with women aged 25 and older, younger women were five times more likely to have been sexually assaulted (5% versus 1%), three times more likely to have been physically assaulted (6% versus 2%), and almost three times more likely to have been psychologically abused (28% versus 10%) by an intimate partner in the 12 months preceding the survey.

The same age-related pattern was seen among men. Among men aged 15 to 24 years, 26% experienced intimate partner violence in the 12 months preceding the survey, higher than any other age group.

### 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 since the age of 15 and in the 12 months preceding the survey.*

*Intimate partner violence 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 partners. 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, and property damage. This category also includes blaming the victim for causing the abusive or violent behaviour, which was measured among those respondents who experienced certain forms of intimate partner violence.

**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 throwing items at the victim, threatening them with a weapon, slapping them, beating them and choking them.

**Sexual violence** includes sexual assault or threats of sexual assault, making the victim perform sex acts that they 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.

Services and resources for victims of crime or violence can be found [here](#).

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 5256.**

The articles "[Intimate partner violence: Experiences of Indigenous First Nations, Métis and Inuit women in Canada, 2018](#)," "[Intimate partner violence: Experiences of visible minority women in Canada, 2018](#)" and "[Intimate partner violence: Experiences of young women 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](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)).