

Violence against seniors and their perceptions of safety in Canada

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From 2010 to 2020, the rate of police-reported violence against seniors increased 22%, with the largest increase observed among senior men (+25%).

Seniors aged 65 years and older comprise almost one-fifth of all Canadians and their proportion of the population continues to grow as baby boomers (i.e., people born between 1946 and 1965) age. Overall, older Canadians are aging better, are more active and have fuller lifestyles than previous generations. At the same time, they remain at risk of experiencing violence by family members, intimate partners, friends, caregivers and others.

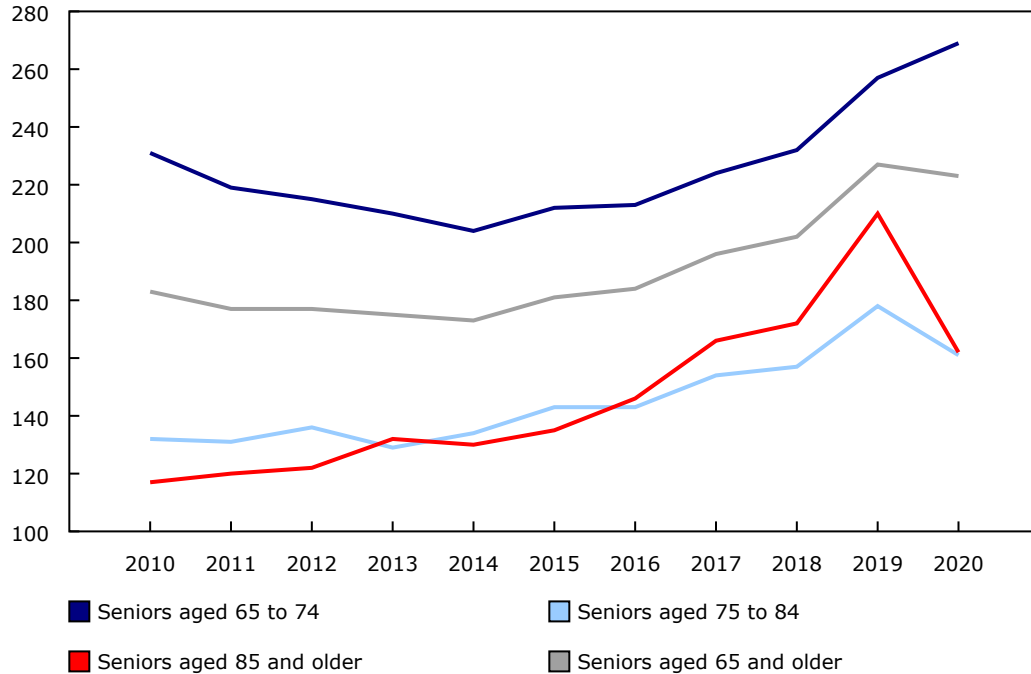
The *Juristat* article "[Violence against seniors and their perceptions of safety in Canada](#)," released today, examines experiences of self-reported and police-reported violent victimization among persons aged 65 years and older and their perceptions of safety. It provides information on annual trends, and discusses characteristics of victims, incidents and accused persons.

Rates of police-reported violent victimization lower among seniors compared with younger Canadians, but rates increasing

In 2020, there were 15,157 seniors that were victims of violence reported by Canadian police services, amounting to a rate of 223 victims per 100,000 population aged 65 years and older. The rates were higher among senior men (270 victims per 100,000 population) compared with senior women (183 victims per 100,000 population). The overall rate was more than five times lower than among Canadians aged 64 years and younger (1,215 victims per 100,000 population), supporting the notion that violent victimization typically declines with age. This pattern, however, is most likely a result of lifestyle characteristics rather than age alone. For example, previous data shows victimization risk is elevated among those who frequently partake in evening activities outside the home and have consumed marijuana in the past 30 days: behaviours which are typically more common among the young.

Chart 1
Senior victims of police-reported violence, by age group and year, Canada, 2010 to 2020

rate per 100,000 population



Note(s): Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations based on July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography. Seniors include those aged 65 years and older. Excludes victims where age was coded as unknown and those where age was greater than 110 are excluded from analyses due to possible instances of miscoding of unknown age within this age category. Based on the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Trend Database, which, as of 2009, includes data for 99% of the population in Canada. As a result, numbers may not match those presented elsewhere in the report.

Source(s): Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Trend Database (3302).

While overall rates are relatively low, police-reported data showed a 22% increase in violent crimes against seniors from 2010 to 2020. Of note, the largest increase during this time was among senior men (+25%), whereas violence against senior women increased 18%. In contrast, for Canadians aged 64 years and younger, there was a decline in violence during the same time period (-9%).

Physical assault most common form of violent victimization reported to police

In 2020, nearly two-thirds (65%) of senior victims of police-reported violence were physically assaulted. This violation type was somewhat more common among senior men than senior women (67% vs 62%) victims of violence.

Overall, 6 in 10 (60%) police-reported incidents of violence against seniors involved the use of physical force and an additional 19% involved the presence of a weapon. Of note, nearly 1 in 4 (23%) senior men were victimized with a weapon, while this was the case for a smaller proportion of senior women (13%).

Just over one-third (35%) of seniors suffered a physical injury as a result of the incident with a higher proportion of men sustaining an injury compared with women (37% versus 32%).

Senior victims of police-reported violence most often victimized by a younger adult

Of the 15,157 senior victims of police-reported violence in 2020, 7,241 (48%) were involved in incidents that had a single victim and single accused person. Focusing on such incidents allows for an analysis of persons accused of violence against seniors. Three-quarters (75%) of these incidents were perpetrated by a male accused. In terms of age, the largest proportion of seniors were victimized by someone aged 25 to 44 years (34%), followed closely by someone aged 45 to 64 years (31%). Just over one-quarter (27%) of senior victims of violence were victimized by someone aged 65 years or older.

Of these police-reported incidents, nearly 6 in 10 (58%) persons accused of violence against seniors had charges laid or recommended against them. This was less common than those accused of violence against non-seniors (74%). Yet, compared with younger victims (18%), a larger proportion of seniors (26%) requested that no further action be taken against the accused despite there being sufficient evidence to support a charge.

Victimization by family members more prevalent among senior victims than non-senior victims of police-reported violence

According to police-reported data, victimization by non-spousal family members was more prevalent among senior victims (25%) than among non-senior victims (15%). Violence by family members was observed more frequently among senior women (30%) victims than those who were senior men (22%). Within this group, senior women were most often victimized by their child or an extended family member (e.g., grandchild, niece, nephew and in-law). A further 11% of senior victims of violence were victimized by a spousal or non-spousal intimate partner, which is less common than non-senior victims (29%). Notably, senior women were also more than twice as likely to have been victimized by an intimate partner compared with senior men (16% vs 7%).

More than one in four (28%) senior victims of violence were victimized by acquaintances, while just under one-quarter (24%) were victimized by a stranger (compared with 20% and 23% of non-senior victims, respectively).

Experiences of emotional or financial abuse less common among seniors than younger Canadians

According to the 2019 General Social Survey (GSS) on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), fewer than 1 in 10 (7.1%) seniors reported experiencing emotional or financial abuse by an intimate partner in the five years preceding the survey. Meanwhile, nearly 1 in 5 (19%) Canadians between the ages of 15 and 64 experienced emotional or financial abuse by an intimate partner during the same time period, which is significantly higher than seniors.

Smaller proportions of seniors experienced emotional abuse (1.5%) or financial abuse (0.7%) from a relative, friend or caregiver in the five years preceding the survey. Emotional abuse within these types of relationships was significantly less common among seniors than non-seniors (1.5% vs 3.3%) while there was no notable difference for financial abuse (0.7% vs 1.0%).

Seniors somewhat or very satisfied with their personal safety from crime

According to the GSS on Victimization, and aligned with relatively low rates of victimization, just over 8 in 10 (82%) seniors were somewhat or very satisfied with their personal safety from crime in 2019, a proportion that exceeded what was documented among younger Canadians (77%). A larger proportion of senior men were satisfied with their personal safety from crime (86%) compared with senior women (79%).

Seniors were more likely than non-seniors to perceive their neighbourhood as having a lower amount of crime compared with other areas in Canada (77% vs 70%). Similarly, a larger proportion of seniors than non-seniors reported having a great deal of confidence in police (50% vs 39%).

Note to readers

The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey collects detailed information on criminal incidents that have come to the attention of police services in Canada. Information includes characteristics of victims, accused persons and incidents. In 2020, data from police services covered 99% of the population of Canada. Victim age is calculated based on the end date of an incident, as reported by the police. Some victims experience violence over a period of time, sometimes years, all of which may be considered by the police to be part of one continuous incident. Information about the number and dates of individual incidents for these victims of continuous violence is not available. Analyses exclude victims where age was greater than 110 due to possible instances of miscoding of unknown age within this age category.

The target population for the General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization) was persons aged 15 years and older living in the provinces and territories, except for those living full-time in institutions. As such, seniors living in institutionalized settings are not included in the survey. Similarly, seniors with severe cognitive or physical disabilities may not have responded to the survey.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey numbers [3302](#) and [4504](#).

The article "[Violence against seniors and their perceptions of safety in Canada](#)" 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; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).