

# Sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, 2022

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In 2022, approximately 1,960 Regular Force members, or 3.5%, reported that they were sexually assaulted in the military workplace or outside of the workplace in an incident that involved Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) or other military members in the 12 months preceding the Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces (SSMCAF).

This rate of sexual assault—which includes sexual attacks, unwanted sexual touching, and sexual activity where the victim was unable to consent—represents a significant increase from rates reported in 2018 (1.6%) and 2016 (1.7%) when previous iterations of the survey were conducted.

Results from the 2022 SSMCAF are now available, in the report "[Sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, 2022](#)." The analysis focuses primarily on the experiences of Regular Force members, who are mostly full-time members, and examines experiences of sexual assault, sexualized behaviour, and discrimination in the military workplace.

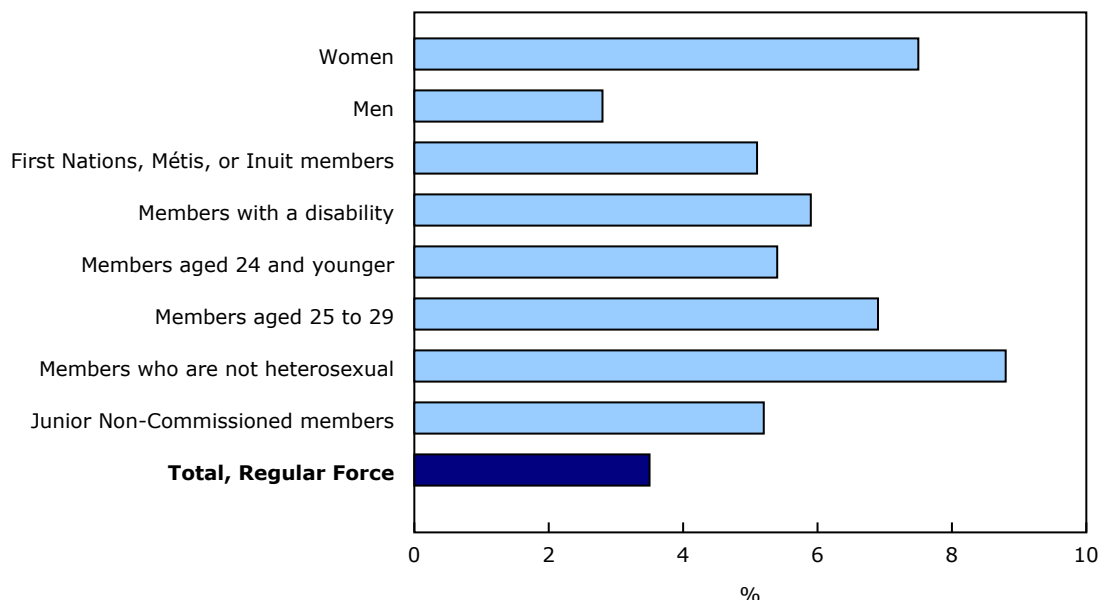
## Experiences of sexual assault more common among women in the Regular Force

Sexual assault was more prevalent among women (7.5%) than men (2.8%) in the Regular Force in 2022. This is consistent with previous findings, both among the military population and the general population. Relative to 2016 and 2018, this represented an increase for both women and men.

Sexual assault was also more prevalent among Regular Force members who are younger, who are Indigenous, who have a disability, or whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual.

**Chart 1**

**Regular Force members who were sexually assaulted in the 12 months preceding the survey, by selected characteristics, 2022**



**Note(s):** Includes sexual assaults in the military workplace and outside the military workplace involving military members (Canadian Armed Forces or foreign) and/or Department of National Defence civilians or contractors. Includes current Regular Force members but may include some incidents of sexual assault which occurred prior to joining the Regular Force (i.e., while a member of the Primary Reserves). Differences between groups are not necessarily statistically significant.  
**Source(s):** Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, 2022 (5235).

Unwanted sexual touching was the most common form of sexual assault experienced by Regular Force members in 2022 (3.3%). Smaller proportions of Regular Force members were victims of sexual attacks (0.6%) and sexual activity where they were unable to consent (0.6%). This was the case for both women and men. It was also consistent with previous cycles and trends that are observed among the population in general.

One in three (33%) Regular Force members who were sexually assaulted in 2022 stated that, in their opinion, their assault was related to the perpetrator's alcohol or drug use; women (43%) were more likely than men (28%) to state this. Nearly half (49%) believed that it was not, while the remaining 18% did not know if alcohol or drug use by the perpetrator was a factor. This is similar to what was observed in 2016 and 2018.

**Level of reporting of sexual assault to anyone in authority lower than in 2018**

Most (64%) victims of sexual assault did not report the incident they experienced to anyone in authority, while around one in six (16%) did not know if anyone in authority was aware of what happened. Just over one in five (21%) Regular Force members who were sexually assaulted in 2022 stated that the incident was reported, a proportion that was lower than 2018 (25%) but not statistically different from 2016 (23%).

There was also a shift in the reasons why Regular Force members decided not to report the assault. In 2016 and 2018, the most common reason for not reporting a sexual assault was that the situation was resolved informally. However, in 2022, the most common reason stated for not reporting was the belief that it would not make a difference, cited by 41% of Regular Force members who had been sexually assaulted. This was followed by fear of negative consequences (36%) and resolving the incident informally on their own (34%).

In 2022, women (26%) were more likely than men (16%) to cite concerns about the formal complaint process as a reason for not reporting. For all other reasons, there were no significant differences between genders.

Among those who did report sexual assault to someone in authority, nearly two-thirds (66%) faced some sort of negative consequence as a result. The most common negative impacts cited were exclusion, bullying, or teasing from peers or other CAF members, being blamed or feeling further victimized, or negative impacts on their career, such as retaliation or reprisal.

## **More Regular Force members personally experienced sexualized or discriminatory behaviour in 2022**

Personal experiences of other types of sexualized or discriminatory behaviours were more prevalent in 2022. The survey measured 15 behaviours that fall into five categories: inappropriate verbal and non-verbal communication, distribution of sexually explicit materials, unwanted physical contact or suggested sexual relations, discrimination on the basis of sex or gender, and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Nearly one in five (19%) Regular Force members reported experiencing one or more sexualized or discriminatory behaviours in the military workplace or involving military members in 2022, higher than 2016 (17%) and 2018 (15%). For each of the 15 behaviours measured by the survey, a higher proportion of Regular Force members personally experienced them in 2022 when compared with 2018.

Just over one in three (34%) women in the Regular Force personally experienced at least one sexualized or discriminatory behaviour in the 12 months preceding the survey, more than twice the proportion of men (16%).

Overall, two-thirds (67%) of Regular Force members stated that they witnessed (saw or heard) or personally experienced sexualized or discriminatory behaviour in the 12 months prior to the survey. This was lower than in 2018 (70%) and 2016 (80%).

## **More Regular Force members intervened when witnessing sexualized or discriminatory behaviours**

Compared with 2018, a higher proportion of Regular Force members who witnessed sexualized or discriminatory behaviours in 2022 intervened. In 2022, more than half of Regular Force members who witnessed inappropriate sexual communication (54%), other sexualized behaviours (51%), or discriminatory behaviours (56%) intervened. This was 10 percentage points higher than levels of bystander action in 2018 (44% of Regular Force members who witnessed inappropriate sexual communication intervened, 40% who witnessed other sexualized behaviours intervened, and 46% who witnessed discriminatory behaviours intervened).

The most common reason for not intervening was a perception that the behaviour was not serious enough. This was much more common in instances of inappropriate sexual communication (69%) than for other sexualized behaviours (47%) or discriminatory behaviours (47%).

## **Regular Force members generally have positive perceptions of their unit**

In terms of how their own unit recognizes and responds to incidents of sexual misconduct, most Regular Force members have positive perceptions. Meanwhile, perceptions of the response at the organizational level, that is, the entirety of the CAF, were also generally positive, but to a lesser extent.

For instance, almost all (96%) Regular Force members agreed that it is understood by their unit that sexual misconduct has no place in the CAF. The promotion and sharing of information about how to report sexual misconduct had the lowest positive perception but was still generally viewed as positive by 80% of Regular Force members.

Around two-thirds (66%) of Regular Force members felt that the CAF holds perpetrators of sexual misconduct accountable for their actions. Those who had been sexually assaulted or personally experienced sexualized or discriminatory behaviours were less likely to agree with this statement.

Ultimately, around 6 in 10 (61%) Regular Force members agreed that sexual misconduct is a problem in the CAF (75% of women and 59% of men). At the same time, 75% of members agreed that the culture surrounding sexual misconduct has improved since they joined the CAF (69% of women and 76% of men).

**Table 1**  
**Canadian Armed Forces Regular Force members who were sexually assaulted in the 12 months preceding the survey, by gender and type of sexual assault, 2016, 2018, and 2022**

	Sexual attack		Unwanted sexual touching		Sexual activity where unable to consent		Total sexual assault <sup>1</sup>	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>2022<sup>2</sup></b>								
Women	160	1.8	580	6.8	140	1.6	640	7.5
Men	180	0.4	1,260	2.7	210	0.4	1,310	2.8
<b>Total<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>340</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1,840</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>1,960</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>2018</b>								
Women	60	0.8*	300	3.7*	70	0.9*	340	4.3*
Men	60	0.1*	480	1.0*	50 <sup>E</sup>	0.1 <sup>E*</sup>	520	1.1*
<b>Total<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>140</b>	<b>0.2*</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>1.4*</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>0.2*</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>1.6*</b>
<b>2016</b>								
Women	70	0.9*	320	4.0*	60	0.7*	380	4.8*
Men	80	0.2*	520	1.1*	60	0.1*	570	1.2*
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>0.3*</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>1.5*</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>0.2*</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>1.7*</b>

<sup>E</sup> use with caution

\* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

1. Total does not equal the sum of the categories of sexual assault as they are not mutually exclusive. Respondents were asked to indicate each type of sexual assault they experienced. Total reflects the number of Regular Force members who reported being the victim of at least one type of sexual assault.

2. Reference category.

3. Includes Regular Force members who stated they were gender diverse or who did not state their gender. These categories were added as of the 2018 cycle as part of the updates to Statistics Canada standards for collecting information on sex and gender.

**Note(s):** Includes those who were sexually assaulted in the 12 months preceding the survey. Includes sexual assaults which occurred in the military workplace and outside the military workplace involving military members (Canadian Armed Forces or foreign) and/or Department of National Defence civilians or contractors. All estimates have been rounded to the nearest 10. Estimates have been rounded independently; therefore, the sum of the rounded categories may not equal the rounded total. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and exclude missing responses. All differences between women and men for a given year or type of sexual assault are statistically significant. Differences between 2016 and 2018 are not statistically significant.

**Source(s):** Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, 2016, 2018, and 2022 (5235).

**Table 2**  
**Canadian Armed Forces Regular Force members who personally experienced sexualized or discriminatory behaviour in the 12 months preceding the survey, by type of behaviour, 2016, 2018, and 2022**

	2016	2018	2022 <sup>1</sup>
	%		
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.2*</b>	<b>15.4*</b>	<b>18.6</b>
Sexual jokes	12.9	10.6*	12.4
Unwanted sexual attention	3.8*	3.1*	4.9
Inappropriate sexual comments	5.2*	4.2*	6.5
Inappropriate discussion about sex life	2.5*	5.1*	7.4
Displaying, showing, or sending sexually explicit messages or materials	2.4	2.2*	2.7
Taking or posting inappropriate or sexually suggestive photos or videos of any Canadian Armed Forces members, without consent	0.3	0.2*	0.4
Indecent exposure or inappropriate display of body parts	1.4	1.0*	1.5
Repeated pressure from the same person for dates or sexual relations	1.1*	1.2*	2.0
Unwelcome physical contact or getting too close	4.1*	3.7*	6.4
Offering workplace benefits for engaging in sexual activity or being mistreated for not engaging in sexual activity	0.3*	0.2*	0.5
Suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act or a woman does not act like woman is supposed to act	3.9*	3.4*	5.9
Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are a man or a woman	2.3*	2.2*	4.4
Comments that people are either not good at a particular job or should be prevented from having a particular job because they are a man or a woman	2.1*	1.9*	3.6
Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation	0.7*	0.6*	1.6
Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are, or are assumed to be, transgender	0.2*	0.2*	0.5

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

1. Reference category.

**Note(s):** Includes those who experienced (targeted, directed at them personally) sexualized or discriminatory behaviours in the 12 months preceding the survey. Includes behaviours which occurred in the military workplace and outside the military workplace involving military members (Canadian Armed Forces or foreign) and/or Department of National Defence civilians or contractors. Percent calculations include those who witnessed the behaviour but did not know if it was directed at them personally. Percent calculations are based on unrounded estimates and exclude missing responses.

**Source(s):** Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, 2016, 2018, and 2022 (5235).

## Note to readers

This report is based on results from the Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces (SSMCAF) conducted by Statistics Canada in 2022 on behalf of the Canadian Armed Forces. From October 2022 to January 2023, active Regular Force and Primary Reserve members were invited to complete a voluntary survey conducted under the authority of the Statistics Act asking about their experiences and perceptions of inappropriate sexualized behaviour, discrimination on the basis of sex or gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity, and sexual assault within the Canadian Armed Forces. This included witnessing or experiencing these types of behaviours within the military workplace, or outside the military workplace but involving other military members or Department of Defence civilians or contractors.

The response rate among Regular Force members was 33%, down from 52% in 2018 and 61% in 2016. In all, 18,582 Regular Force members completed the survey in 2022; their responses were weighted to represent the entire Regular Force population. After weighting, the submitted responses represented approximately 56,000 Regular Force members.

Given the declines in the response rate for the SSMCAF in 2022 relative to previous cycles, additional methodological analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which the results from 2022 are comparable with those from 2016 and 2018. This analysis found that data for the Regular Force is a reliable representation of members and their experiences in 2022, and is comparable to data from previous cycles.

As with all Statistics Canada surveys, respondents were informed that their individual responses would be protected under the Statistics Act.

### Military workplace

For the purposes of this survey, the military workplace was defined as anywhere on a base, wing, or ship, including barracks and messes, as well as deployments, temporary duty/attached posting, and training courses. The military workplace also included sanctioned events (events approved by the Chain of Command or someone in authority within a unit), such as parades, mess dinners, unit parties, unit sports activities, adventure training, or course parties.

### Behaviours included in the definition of sexual misconduct

#### Sexual assault

- **Sexual attack:** Someone forced you or attempted to force you into any unwanted sexual activity, by threatening you, holding you down, or hurting you in some way.
- **Unwanted sexual touching:** Someone touched you against your will in any sexual way, including unwanted touching or grabbing, kissing, or fondling.
- **Sexual activity where unable to consent:** Someone subjected you to a sexual activity to which you were not able to consent, including being drugged, intoxicated, manipulated, or forced in ways other than physically.

#### Sexualized behaviours

##### Inappropriate verbal or non-verbal communication

- Sexual jokes
- Unwanted sexual attention
- Inappropriate sexual comments
- Inappropriate discussion about sex life.

##### Sexually explicit materials

- Displaying, showing, or sending sexually explicit materials
- Taking and/or posting inappropriate or sexually suggestive photos or videos of any CAF members without consent.

##### Physical contact or sexual relations

- Indecent exposure or inappropriate display of body parts
- Repeated pressure from the same person for dates or sexual relationships
- Unwelcome physical contact or getting too close

- *Offering workplace benefits for engaging in sexual activity or being mistreated for not engaging in sexual activity.*

**Discriminatory behaviours**

**Discrimination on the basis of sex or gender**

- *Suggestions that a man does not act like a man is supposed to act or a woman does not act like a woman is supposed to act*
- *Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sex or gender*
- *Comments that people are either not good at a particular job or should be prevented from having a particular job because of their sex or gender.*

**Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity**

- *Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because of their sexual orientation or assumed sexual orientation*
- *Someone being insulted, mistreated, ignored, or excluded because they are (or are assumed to be) transgender.*

**Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [5235](#).**

The report "[Sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, 2022](#)" ([85-603-X](#)) is now available.

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](mailto:infostats@statcan.gc.ca)) or Media Relations ([statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca](mailto:statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca)).