

# Victims of police-reported family and intimate partner violence in Canada, 2021

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Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, increased attention has focused on the issue of family violence and intimate partner violence. With many individuals spending more time at home with household members—often living, working and studying in isolation during uncertain and stressful times—ongoing concern about the safety of individuals living in abusive situations has been at the forefront for victim services, such as shelters for victims of abuse.

Today, the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics at Statistics Canada is releasing a series of downloadable data tables detailing the number and characteristics of victims of police-reported family violence and intimate partner violence, including information on victim age and gender, the type of victim–accused relationship and the type of violence experienced, and other key variables of interest (see Note to readers). This article presents high-level police-reported family violence and intimate partner violence trends based on data from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey and the Homicide Survey.

It is important to note that the information presented in this article reflects only the incidents of family violence and intimate partner violence that were reported to police. Often, these types of incidents go unreported to authorities. For instance, according to the 2019 General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), one in five (19%) victims of self-reported spousal violence indicated the violence they experienced was reported to police (for more information, see [Spousal violence in Canada, 2019](#)). During the pandemic in particular, reduced in-person social contacts with friends, extended family and third-party individuals (e.g., teachers, doctors) may have affected the identification and reporting of violence and abuse to authorities.

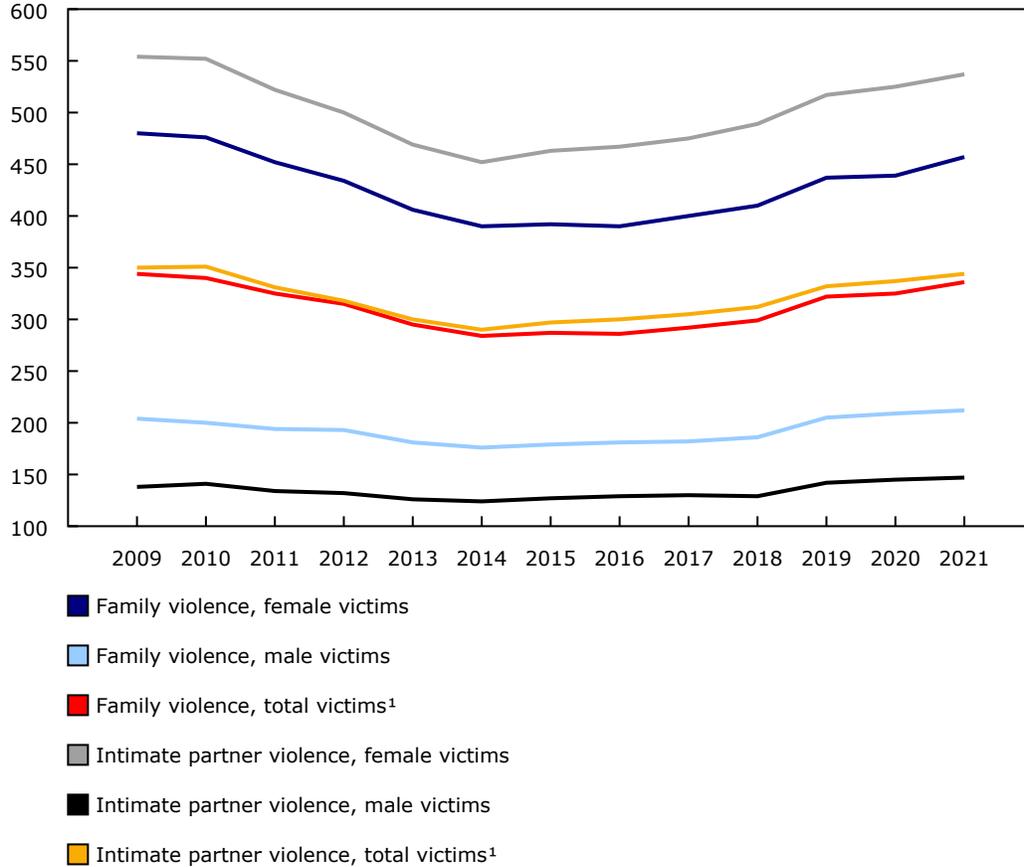
## Police-reported family violence increases for the fifth consecutive year

There were 127,082 victims of police-reported family violence (violence committed by spouses, parents, children, siblings and extended family members) in 2021, a rate of 336 victims per 100,000 population. This marked the fifth consecutive year of increase. Women and girls represented two-thirds (69%) of family violence victims. The rate of family violence was more than two times higher for women and girls than for men and boys (457 victims versus 212 per 100,000 population).



**Chart 1**  
**Victims of police-reported violence, by type of relationship, gender and year, Canada, 2009 to 2021**

rate per 100,000 population



1. Includes a relatively small number of victims whose gender was coded as unknown and those with unidentifiable human remains.  
**Note(s):** Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations based on July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography. Victims of family violence include those aged 110 years and younger, and victims of intimate partner violence include those aged 12 to 110 years. Victims aged older than 110 years are excluded from analyses because of possible instances of miscoding of unknown age within this age category. Excludes victims where the age was unknown or where the accused—victim relationship was unknown. Excludes a small number of victims in Quebec whose age was unknown but was miscoded as 0. Based on the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Trend Database, which, as of 2009, includes data for 99% of the population in Canada.  
**Source(s):** Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Trend Database (3302).

From 2020 to 2021, this type of violence increased by 3%, while non-family violence increased to a larger degree (+6%). However, compared with 2019 (the year before the pandemic), family violence was 4% higher in 2021, while non-family violence was 1% higher. The increase in family violence is likely a reflection of people spending more time at home, often isolating from others, during the pandemic.

In 2009—the first year of comparable trend data—the rate of family violence was 344 victims per 100,000 population. Since then, the rate declined year over year until 2014, at which point it began to increase. In 2021, the rate of family violence was 2% lower than in 2009, while family violence against women and girls decreased by 5% and increased by 4% for men and boys. Among the provinces, the largest increases in family violence from 2009 to 2021 were in Quebec (+23%) and New Brunswick (+22%), while the largest decreases were in British Columbia (-28%) and Prince Edward Island (-16%).

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The most extreme form of family violence is homicide. Of the 788 homicide victims reported in 2021, 154 were killed by a family member. Six in 10 (60%) of these victims were women and girls. The number of victims of family-related homicide in 2021 was about the same as in 2020 (153 victims), but it was higher than what was reported in 2019 (145 victims).

## **Seventh consecutive year of gradual increase in police-reported intimate partner violence**

In 2021, police reported 114,132 victims of intimate partner violence (violence committed by current and former legally married spouses, common-law partners, dating partners and other intimate partners) aged 12 years and older (344 victims per 100,000 population). It marked the seventh consecutive year of gradual increase for this type of violence. Eight in 10 (79%) victims of such violence were women and girls, and the rate of victimization was nearly four times higher among women and girls than men and boys (537 versus 147).

Compared with 2020, the rate of intimate partner violence increased by 2% in 2021, while non-intimate partner violence increased by 6%. However, compared with 2019, before the pandemic, intimate partner violence was 4% higher in 2021 while non-intimate partner violence was 2% higher.

While intimate partner violence against women and girls decreased by 3% between 2009 and 2021, it increased by 6% among men and boys over this period. During this time, the provinces with the largest increases in intimate partner violence were New Brunswick (+39%) and Quebec (+28%), while the largest decreases were in British Columbia (-28%) and Prince Edward Island (-19%).

According to the latest cycle of the General Social Survey on Canadians' Safety (Victimization), which collects self-reported information about experiences of victimization, 3.5% of Canadians in the provinces experienced spousal violence in the five years preceding 2019, significantly lower than 6.2% in 2009. This held true for women (4.2% versus 6.4%) and men (2.7% versus 6.0%). For more information about self-reported spousal violence, see [Spousal violence in Canada, 2019](#).

## **Large increase in police-reported intimate partner sexual assault**

Among victims in 2021, there was a large increase in the rate of level 1 sexual assault (sexual assault violating the sexual integrity of the victim) (+19% compared with 2020), while overall police-reported violence increased to a smaller degree (+5%). Among intimate partners specifically, there was also a large increase in level 1 sexual assault compared with 2020 (+22%).

Level 2 sexual assault (with a weapon or causing bodily harm) in intimate partner relationships also increased compared with 2020 (+6%). At the same time, level 3 sexual assault (aggravated sexual assault) decreased (-12%).

Among victims of intimate partner violence, other types of violence were also higher in 2021. For example, criminal harassment was 10% higher in 2021 than in 2020 and in 2019, while indecent and harassing communications increased by 11% since 2020 and by 29% since 2019. Uttering threats was relatively stable (-0.5%) in 2021 compared with 2020, and was 3% higher than in 2019.

In 2021, 90 homicide victims were killed by an intimate partner. Three-quarters (76%) of these victims were women and girls. The number of victims of intimate partner homicide in 2021 was higher than in 2020 (84 victims) and 2019 (77 victims).

## **Police-reported family violence against children and youth has increased by 25% since 2009**

In 2021, children and youth aged 17 years and younger represented one in five (19%) victims of police-reported family violence. Of these 24,504 children and youth, more than 6 in 10 (64%) were girls. The rate of family violence among children and youth was 343 victims per 100,000 population, and it was nearly twice as high among girls (447) than boys (242).

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Family violence against children and youth was 9% higher in 2021 than it was before the pandemic in 2019. Compared with 2020, the rate of family violence among children and youth increased by 13%. Longer-term trends indicate that, since 2009, family violence against children and youth increased by 25%, with a larger increase noted among girls (+31%) than among boys (+14%).

### Since 2009, police-reported family violence against seniors has increased by 37%

There were 5,799 seniors aged 65 years and older who were victims of police-reported family violence in 2021, representing 5% of victims of this type of violence. Senior women had a higher rate of family violence than senior men (88 versus 76 victims per 100,000 population), and women accounted for nearly 6 in 10 (57%) senior victims.

In 2021, family violence against seniors was 8% higher than in 2020 and 14% higher than before the pandemic in 2019. Similar increases were noted among senior victims of family violence, regardless of gender. Compared with 2009, however, the rate of family violence against seniors increased by 37% over the longer-term.

For more information about violence against seniors, see [Violence against seniors and their perceptions of safety in Canada](#).

#### Note to readers

Since 1998, Statistics Canada has released the annual publication "Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile" as part of the Government of Canada's Family Violence Initiative, which seeks to address intimate partner violence and family-related violence against children and youth, and seniors. Similar to last year, however, the data tables from this publication are being released as a series of downloadable tables (35-10-0199-01, 35-10-0200-01, 35-10-0201-01 and 35-10-0202-01). These tables allow the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics at Statistics Canada to release annual police-reported family violence data in a more timely and user-friendly format. Also released today are a series of tables on victims of police-reported violent crime more broadly: tables 35-10-0049-01, 35-10-0050-01 and 35-10-0051-01.

The data presented in this article are based on the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey, Trend Database. The UCR 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. As of 2021, trend data from police services covered 99% of the population of Canada.

Family violence refers to violence committed by spouses (legally married, separated, divorced and common-law, and current and former dating partners who lived together at the time of the incident), 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.

**Table 1**  
**Victims of police-reported family violence, by age group, gender and year, Canada, 2009 to 2021**

	Children and youth			Adults			Seniors		
	Female victims	Male victims	Total victims <sup>1</sup>	Female victims	Male victims	Total victims <sup>1</sup>	Female victims	Male victims	Total victims <sup>1</sup>
	rate (per 100,000 population)								
2009	340	212	276	621	229	425	64	55	60
2010	353	212	281	612	224	418	68	52	61
2011	339	210	273	581	216	399	66	54	61
2012	331	204	267	558	218	388	66	52	60
2013	311	192	250	523	205	364	63	52	58
2014	297	190	243	505	199	352	65	53	60
2015	289	186	237	513	205	358	65	53	60
2016	290	188	238	510	207	358	67	57	62
2017	318	193	255	519	209	364	69	57	64
2018	344	209	276	530	210	369	71	60	66
2019	393	243	316	558	228	393	78	66	73
2020	379	230	304	568	239	403	81	71	76
2021	447	242	343	578	240	408	88	76	83

1. Includes a relatively small number of victims whose gender was coded as unknown and those with unidentifiable human remains.

**Note(s):** Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations based on July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography. Victims of family violence include those aged 110 years and younger. Victims aged older than 110 years are excluded from analyses because of possible instances of miscoding of unknown age within this age category. Children and youth refer to those aged 17 years and younger, adults refer to those aged 18 to 64 years and seniors refer to those aged 65 to 110 years. Excludes victims where the age was unknown or where the accused—victim relationship was unknown. Excludes a small number of victims in Quebec whose age was unknown but was miscoded as 0. Based on the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Trend Database, which, as of 2009, includes data for 99% of the population in Canada.

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

**Table 2**  
**Victims of police-reported intimate partner violence, by age group, gender and year, Canada, 2009 to 2021**

	Aged 12 to 24			Aged 25 to 64			Aged 65 and older		
	Female victims	Male victims	Total victims <sup>1</sup>	Female victims	Male victims	Total victims <sup>1</sup>	Female victims	Male victims	Total victims <sup>1</sup>
	rate (per 100,000 population)								
2009	909	127	511	594	169	382	23	15	20
2010	924	138	524	590	171	381	26	14	21
2011	884	132	500	559	162	361	25	16	21
2012	838	130	475	542	160	352	25	15	20
2013	790	115	443	513	157	336	24	15	20
2014	746	117	422	502	154	329	25	15	20
2015	774	118	435	517	159	338	25	16	21
2016	785	115	439	522	163	343	27	16	22
2017	781	119	440	541	165	354	26	15	21
2018	782	111	436	566	168	367	27	16	22
2019	805	118	451	609	186	397	29	19	24
2020	773	111	432	635	194	415	30	19	25
2021	796	115	446	654	196	425	31	21	27

1. Includes a relatively small number of victims whose gender was coded as unknown and those with unidentifiable human remains.

**Note(s):** Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population. Populations based on July 1 estimates from Statistics Canada, Centre for Demography. Victims include those aged 12 to 110 years. Victims aged older than 110 years are excluded from analyses because of possible instances of miscoding of unknown age within this age category. Excludes victims where the age was unknown or where the accused—victim relationship was unknown. Excludes a small number of victims in Quebec whose age was unknown but was miscoded as 0. Based on the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, Trend Database, which, as of 2009, includes data for 99% of the population in Canada.

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

**Available tables:** [35-10-0049-01](#) to [35-10-0051-01](#) and [35-10-0199-01](#) to [35-10-0202-01](#) .

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

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)).