

Police-reported sexual assaults in Canada before and after #MeToo, 2016 and 2017

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Police-reported sexual assaults in Canada before and after #MeToo, 2016 and 2017: Highlights

- Among criminal incidents founded by police, there were more police-reported sexual assaults in 2017 than in any year since 1998.
- In 2017, the number of victims of police-reported sexual assault in Canada peaked in October, coinciding with the widespread #MeToo social media movement. The number of reports made in October and November of 2017 were higher than any other calendar month since comparable data became available in 2009.
- As was the case before #MeToo, the majority of sexual assaults reported to police after #MeToo had taken place recently; just under half on the day of reporting (47%) and a further one-quarter (26%) within the month leading up to reporting to police. After #MeToo, an increase in historical sexual assaults over a decade old was noted, although they represented a minority of cases overall (6% in total over 2016 and 2017).
- Quebec recorded the largest increase in the number of police-reported sexual assaults after #MeToo (+61%). More specifically, the CMAs of Québec (+78%), Sherbrooke (+76%), Saguenay (+69%), and Montréal (+67%) saw considerable increases, as did Brantford, Ontario (+76%).
- Compared with before #MeToo, fewer accused persons were identified in connection with the sexual assault after #MeToo; however, when an accused person was identified, there was no change in the proportion of persons charged.
- The age and sex profiles of victims were similar before and after #MeToo. Young women and girls under 25 years old continued to have the highest rates of police-reported sexual assault, accounting for over half of victims before (55%) and after #MeToo (56%).
- After #MeToo, there were more sexual assaults reported to police that involved an accused known to the victim, even when an accused was not identified in connection with the crime.
- Sexual assault reports involving an accused with whom the victim had a business relationship (i.e., sexual assaults perpetrated by co-workers, service providers, or patrons or clients of public services) increased after #MeToo, though these incidents represented a small proportion of sexual assaults overall (4%).
- Though sexual assaults on school property represented a minority of cases (5%), reports of sexual assaults on school grounds, largely at non-postsecondary institutions with younger students rather than a university or college, increased after #MeToo.
- Considerably more youth (12 to 17 year olds) were accused of sexual assault after #MeToo.

Police-reported sexual assaults in Canada before and after #MeToo, 2016 and 2017

by Cristine Rotenberg and Adam Cotter

In 2017, sexual violence and sexual misconduct were the centre of significant public discussion. A number of high-profile cases involving prominent figures and celebrities accused of sexual assault or misconduct received widespread media attention, and many victims' accounts of sexual abuse and harassment were shared. In response, several social media campaigns were launched, with #MeToo being one of the most prominent, going viral in October of 2017. While most of these social media campaigns and cases originated from the United States, they arguably had an impact on the discussion of sexual violence internationally and in Canada.

Recently, Statistics Canada has published a wide range of reports focused on sexual violence, including: a profile of sexual assault victims and their assailants (Rotenberg 2017a), attrition of sexual assault cases in the justice system (Rotenberg 2017b), sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces (Cotter 2016), self-reported sexual victimization, including incidents not reported to the police (Conroy and Cotter 2017), and most recently, sexual assaults classified as 'unfounded' by police (Greenland and Cotter 2018) and sexual assault data as part of the 2017 annual crime statistics report (Allen 2018).

The present *Juristat* article expands on previous analytical reports and focuses on the shifts in police-reported sexual assaults before and after #MeToo, as well as changes in victim characteristics among those who reported to police. It is important to recall that Canada's most recent victimization survey (2014) showed that only a minority (1 in 20)¹ of sexual assaults are reported to police (Conroy and Cotter 2017), and therefore police-reported sexual assault data do not reflect the true extent of sexual assault and sexual violence in Canada. In addition, because so few sexual assaults are reported to police in the first place, changes in reporting behaviour – such as new reports prompted by #MeToo – are likely to have notable impacts on police-reported data. Consequently, increases in police-reported sexual assaults during this time period may not necessarily reflect increases in the prevalence of sexual assault itself, but rather increases in reporting to police as well as changes in police practices (Text box 3). Nonetheless, these statistics are important in understanding the nature of sexual assaults that are reported to police in Canada, as well as informing criminal justice system planning and workload allocation given the potential increase in resources required at various levels (e.g., policing, courts, and victim services).

Text box 1

Background: #MeToo

Preceded by much discussion of sexual harassment and violence in the media, the #MeToo movement went viral on or around October 15, 2017. In short, it served as an accessible way for people around the world to simultaneously indicate, by using the hashtag #MeToo on social media, that they had been a victim of sexual violence, harassment, or misconduct of some form at some point in their lives. As millions used the hashtag, it quickly gained traction on social media before entering news media and general public discourse. As a result, #MeToo arguably became one of the most powerful public demonstrations of the magnitude of victims affected by sexual violence or harassment.

A number of other social movements that aimed to raise awareness of sexual violence also surfaced around this period, such as #TimesUp in January of 2018. Accusations of sexual violence or misconduct against a number of high-profile celebrities and powerful individuals also came to light in 2017 and 2018, contributing further to public discussions and calls to support victims. One underlying message of these campaigns was that victims of sexual violence should be supported and encouraged to share their stories.

The findings of this study show a marked increase in sexual assaults reported by police after #MeToo. Many police services in Canada have also cited #MeToo and related movements as factors in increases in reported sexual assaults in their jurisdictions (Laframboise 2017; Coubrough 2018; Winiewski 2017; Mehta 2018; Smith 2018).

Number of victims of sexual assaults reported by police increased after #MeToo

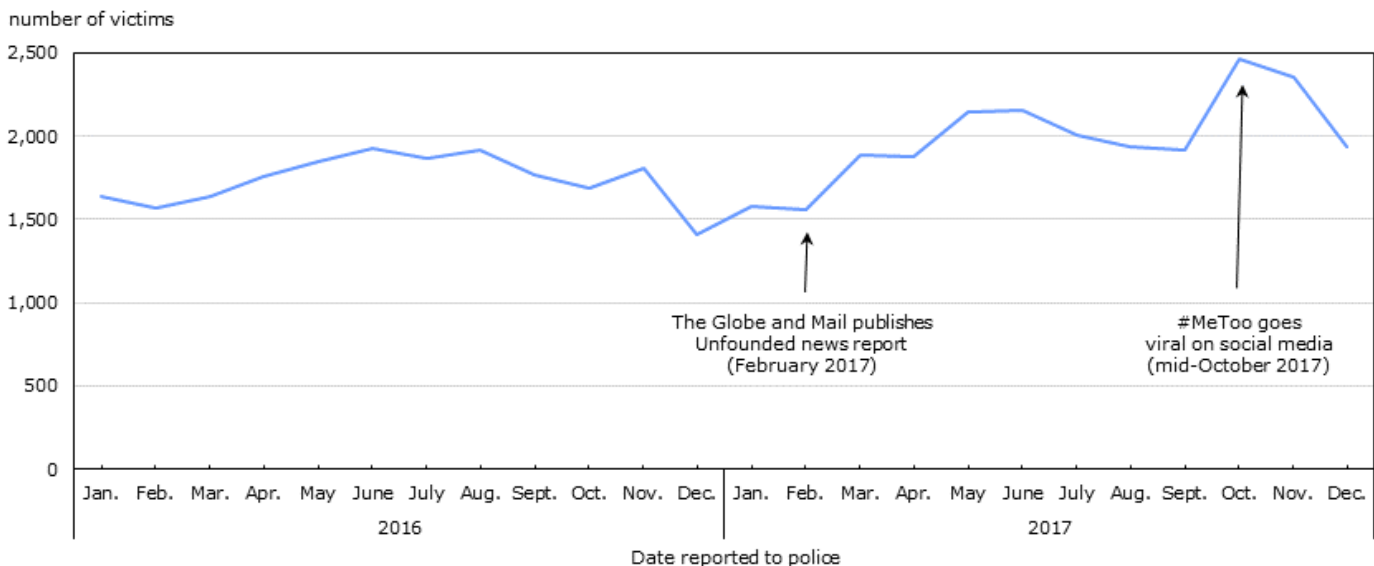
According to data reported by police in Canada to the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey, there were 23,834 victims of founded² sexual assaults (level 1, 2 and 3 combined³) in 2017. This translated to a rate of 65.5 victims of sexual assault per 100,000 population, a 13% increase from the previous year (58.0 per 100,000 population). In both 2016 and 2017, 9 in 10 victims were women.

Before and after #MeToo: Defining analytical time periods

Pre- and post-#MeToo time periods were defined to analyze police-reported sexual assaults and their characteristics before and after the social media movement went viral (see Text box 1). The pre-#MeToo period as defined by this study spans January 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017, and the post-#MeToo period includes October 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017.⁴ Although #MeToo has been recognized for going viral on social media on or around October 15th, 2017, the whole month of October is included in the post-#MeToo analytical time period because it allows for a more complete temporal analysis on a month-to-month as well as a quarterly basis, and because there was evidence of an increase in incidents reported by police leading up to mid-October. It is important to note that the pre- and post-#MeToo time periods applied in this analysis are not to be taken as rigid characterizations of the social climate around or public attention towards sexual violence. Indeed, attention on sexual violence in Canada did not only begin in October of 2017, and other events, such as a study on unfounded sexual assaults published in *The Globe and Mail* (see Text box 3), had taken place prior to. Ultimately, the data evidenced a clear jump in sexual assaults reported by police in October of 2017, which reinforced the use of this period as an analytical marker for the purposes of this study.

Data provided by police services in Canada indicate a marked increase in the number of victims⁵ of founded sexual assault incidents during the same month that the #MeToo movement first went viral (Chart 1). It should be noted that reporting a crime to police can be done by any party, including the victim, a parent or guardian, or another third party.

Chart 1
Victims of police-reported sexual assault, by date reported to police, Canada, 2016 and 2017



Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. This chart does not take into account changes in population counts. The report date is the date when the incident became known by the police or was reported to the police. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%).

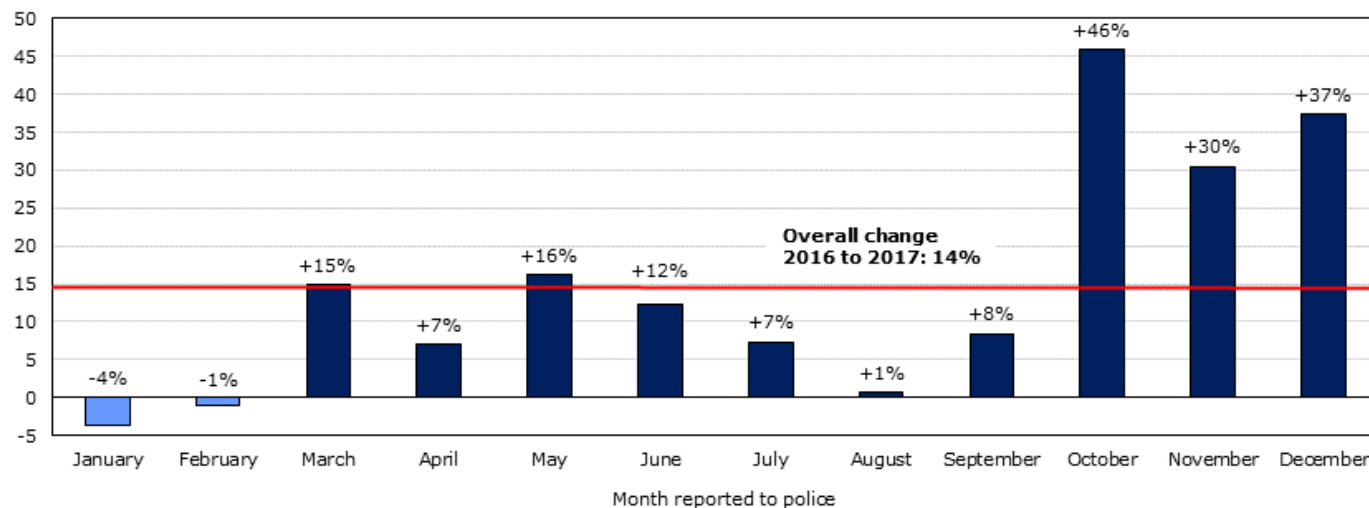
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

There were nearly 2,500 victims of sexual assault reported by police in Canada in October 2017, higher than any other month in 2016 or 2017. This constituted 29% more victims than the month prior, and 46% more victims than in October of the previous year (Chart 2). Historically, there is typically an increase in reported sexual assaults in the summer months, making the sharp increase in October even more noteworthy.

Chart 2

Percent change in number of victims of police-reported sexual assault, by month of reporting to police, Canada, 2017 compared with 2016

percent change



Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Percent change numbers represent the percent change between the number of victims of sexual assault reported in a given month in 2016 and the same month in 2017. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. The report date is the date when the incident became known by the police or was reported to the police. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%).
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

During the post-#MeToo period of October 1 to December 31, 2017, there were 6,766 victims of sexual assault incidents reported to and deemed founded by police (see Text box 3). Because the pre-#MeToo period in this study spans 21 months (January 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017), average quarterly numbers are provided throughout this article in order to better compare the pre-#MeToo period with the three months of post-#MeToo data. Before #MeToo, there was an average of 5,418 victims of sexual assault per quarter, which increased by 25% after #MeToo.⁶ These figures translate to an average of 74 sexual assault victims reported to police per day during the post-#MeToo period, up from 59 per day before #MeToo.

Text box 2
A history of police-reported sexual assaults

The number of sexual assault incidents reported to police in 2017 was higher than it has been since 1998.

Since comparable national-level data by month became available in 2009, sexual assaults reported to police have followed a relatively consistent pattern, where more incidents are reported to police in the summer months relative to other times during the year. This pattern can also be observed with many other types of violent crime, such as physical assault.

However, the end of 2017 did not follow this typical pattern; instead, there were more sexual assaults reported to police in October or November than during any other calendar month since comparable data became available in 2009.

More information on trends in police-reported sexual assaults is available in Statistics Canada publications (Allen 2018; Cotter and Beaupré 2014; Rotenberg 2017a).

Majority of increase in police-reported sexual assaults after #MeToo was driven by recently-committed crimes

One research question raised in relation to the observed increase in police-reported sexual assaults following #MeToo was whether these cases were historical sexual assaults – that is, whether the conversations prompted by the #MeToo movement drove more victims to come forward to police with experiences that may have occurred months, years, or decades prior. By nature of the offence and the emotional trauma often endured by victims, sexual assaults, relative to other types of violent crime, tend to be reported to police longer after they took place (Rotenberg 2017a).

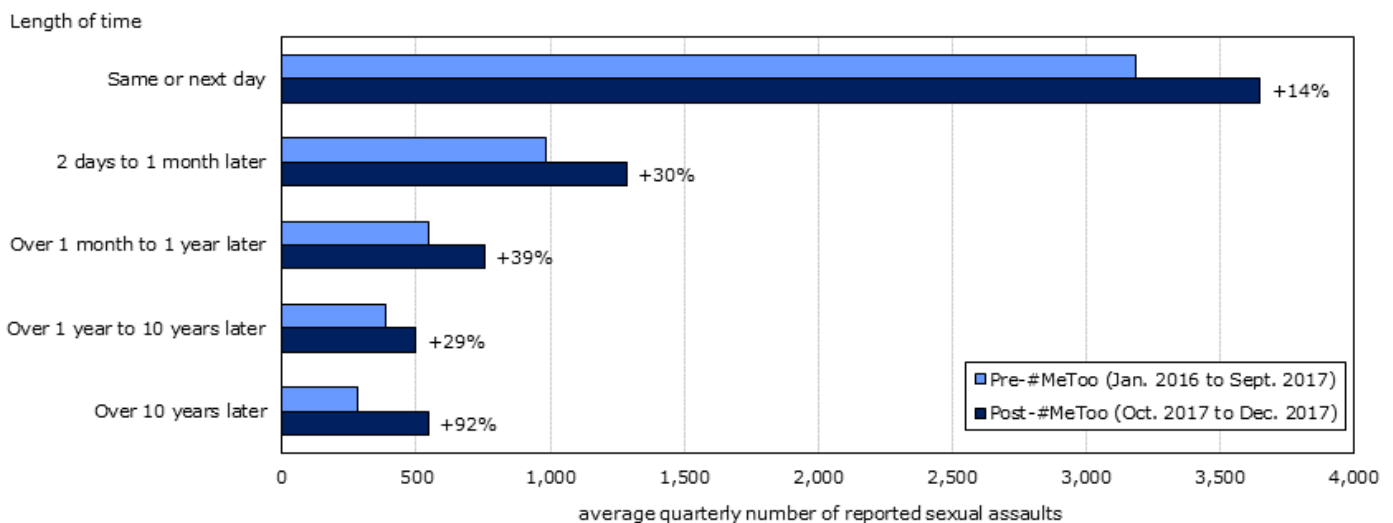
Though sexual assault is more likely to be delayed in coming to the attention of police relative to other types of crime, according to 2016 and 2017 police-reported data, the majority of sexual assaults that were reported to police had occurred

somewhat recently. Both before and after #MeToo, about three-quarters of sexual assaults were reported to police within the month they occurred (77% pre- and 73% post-#MeToo), including about half that were reported the same day they happened⁷ (51% and 47%). Of incidents that were not reported the same day they occurred, the median time to reporting to police was just over a month (32 days) for post-#MeToo cases. This was longer than the 3-week median (21 days) it took for pre-#MeToo sexual assaults to come to the attention of police.⁸

Proportionally, a marginal difference was noted when looking at sexual assaults that occurred more than one year before being reported to police. Before #MeToo, 12% of victims reported a sexual assault to police over a year after the incident, compared with a slightly higher proportion (16%) of victims after #MeToo. While proportions were fairly close, after #MeToo, the number of sexual assaults that took place a year prior to being reported was 56% higher than an average quarter before #MeToo (1,043 versus 671). More specifically, the increase in historical sexual assaults was driven by incidents that happened over a decade prior to being reported.

After #MeToo, there were 544 sexual assaults reported that had taken place more than a decade earlier, nearly twice as many as an average quarter before #MeToo (284). While this represented a 92% increase in reports per quarter, decade-old cases still represented a small proportion of sexual assault reports overall (5% pre-#MeToo and 8% post-#MeToo). This, combined with increases in reports of sexual assaults from a few weeks to a year after the incident, meant a 5 percentage point decline in the proportion of sexual assaults reported to police on the same or next day (from 59% before #MeToo to 54% after), though the average quarterly number of these incidents still increased by 14% (Chart 3).

Chart 3
Delay in reporting of sexual assaults to police, by #MeToo period, Canada, 2016 and 2017



Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Percent change numbers represent the difference between the proportion of sexual assaults in each time to reporting category before and after #MeToo, in percentage points. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. Time periods represent the time elapsed between the incident and the date it was reported to police. The report date is the date when the incident became known by the police or was reported to the police. The incident date is the date when the crime is known or believed to have occurred. Reporting a crime to police can be done by any party, including the victim, a parent or guardian, or another third party. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Excludes incidents whose report dates were erroneously reported as prior to the incident date (<1%), and incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%).
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

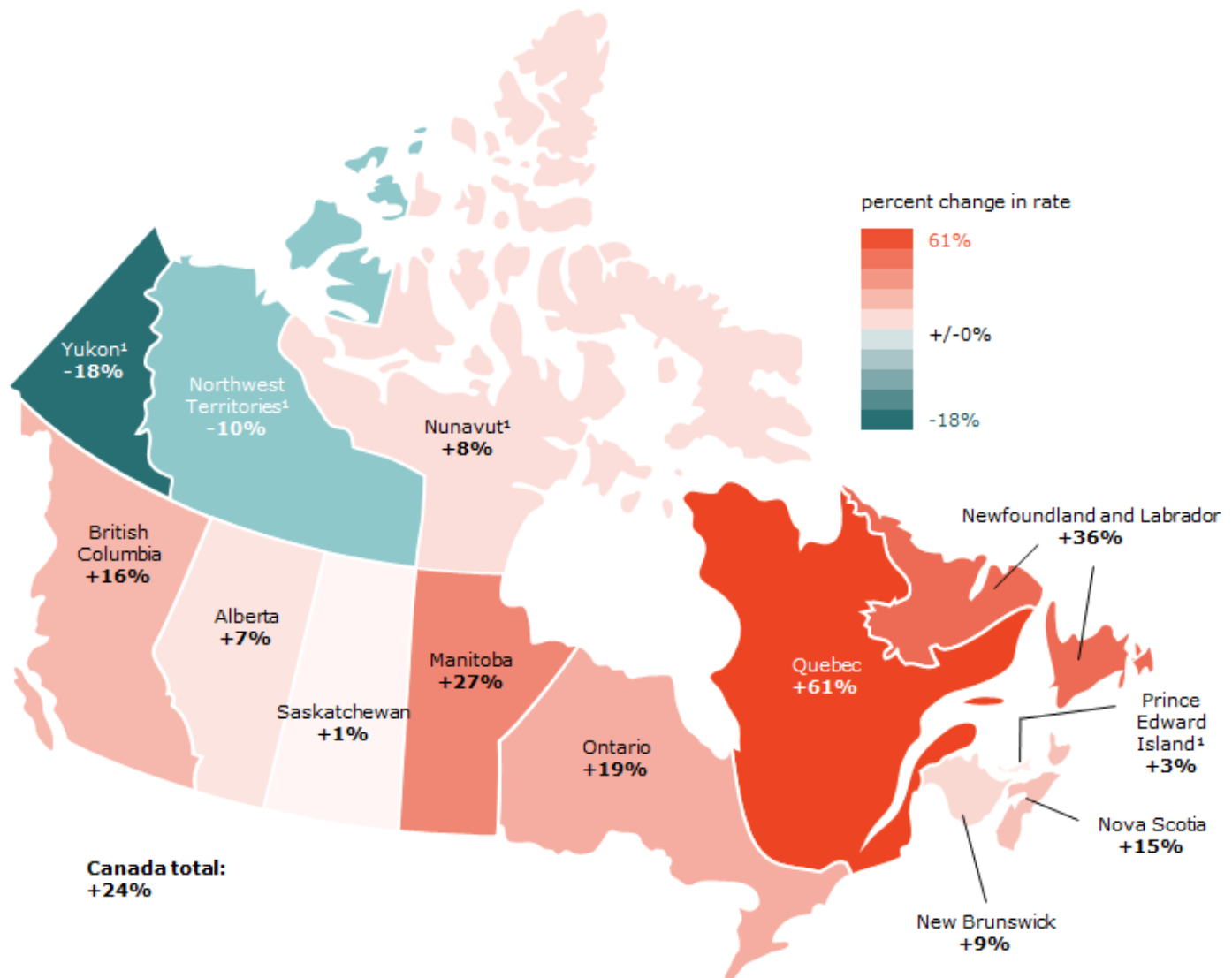
As such, despite increases in historical sexual assaults after #MeToo, which also resulted in longer median times between the incident occurring and being reported, it is important to recognize that the majority of the increase in reported sexual assaults post-#MeToo was driven by recently-committed crimes coming to the attention of police.

Quebec reported largest increase in rate of sexual assaults after #MeToo

Nationally, in the 21 months prior to #MeToo (January 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017), there was an average of 15.0 victims of sexual assault per 100,000 population per quarter, a rate that increased by 24% to 18.6 per 100,000 population after #MeToo (Table 1). Note that analysis of these periods uses average quarterly numbers and rates in order to compare the pre- and post-#MeToo periods. They are therefore not directly comparable with other analytical products which publish annual rates.⁹

As is the case for most violent crimes, the rates of police-reported sexual assaults were highest in the three territories, both pre- and post-#MeToo (Table 1). In the three month period following #MeToo (October 1 to December 31, 2017), Nunavut reported the highest quarterly rate at 113.2 victims per 100,000 population, followed by the Northwest Territories (78.8) and Yukon (41.7). The lowest rates after #MeToo were reported in British Columbia (15.0), New Brunswick (13.4), and Prince Edward Island (12.6).

By far, the largest increase in quarterly rate of police-reported sexual assaults after #MeToo was in Quebec, up by 61% compared to the pre-#MeToo quarterly average (from 12.4 to 20.0 victims per 100,000 population). Newfoundland and Labrador (+36%) and Manitoba (+27%) were the only other provinces or territories to record an increase higher than the national average increase (+24%) after #MeToo (Map 1). Much smaller increases following #MeToo were noted in Saskatchewan (+0.6%) and Prince Edward Island (+3%). A decrease in rate was observed in Yukon (-18%) and the Northwest Territories (-10%), however, the small number of police-reported sexual assaults post-#MeToo in these territories (Table 1) should be taken into consideration when interpreting these changes. Collectively, the three territories saw a small decrease (-4%) in quarterly rate of reported sexual assaults after #MeToo. There are various economic and social factors which may help explain the different trends observed in the territories, one of which may be less widespread use of social media in Northern Canada, as internet access and use is much lower (Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation 2017).

Map 1**Percent change in rate of police-reported sexual assaults after #MeToo, by province or territory, Canada, 2016 and 2017**

1. Base figures for the three-month post-#MeToo period for the provinces and territories indicated are low (less than 50 victims of sexual assault, see Table 1); exercise caution when interpreting the percent change in rate for these provinces and territories.

Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. Rates for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average rate across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo on the basis of 100,000 annual population figures, which means that rates will be lower than overall annual rates and thus are not comparable to annual sexual assault rates reported elsewhere. Populations are based upon July 1st annual estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%).

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

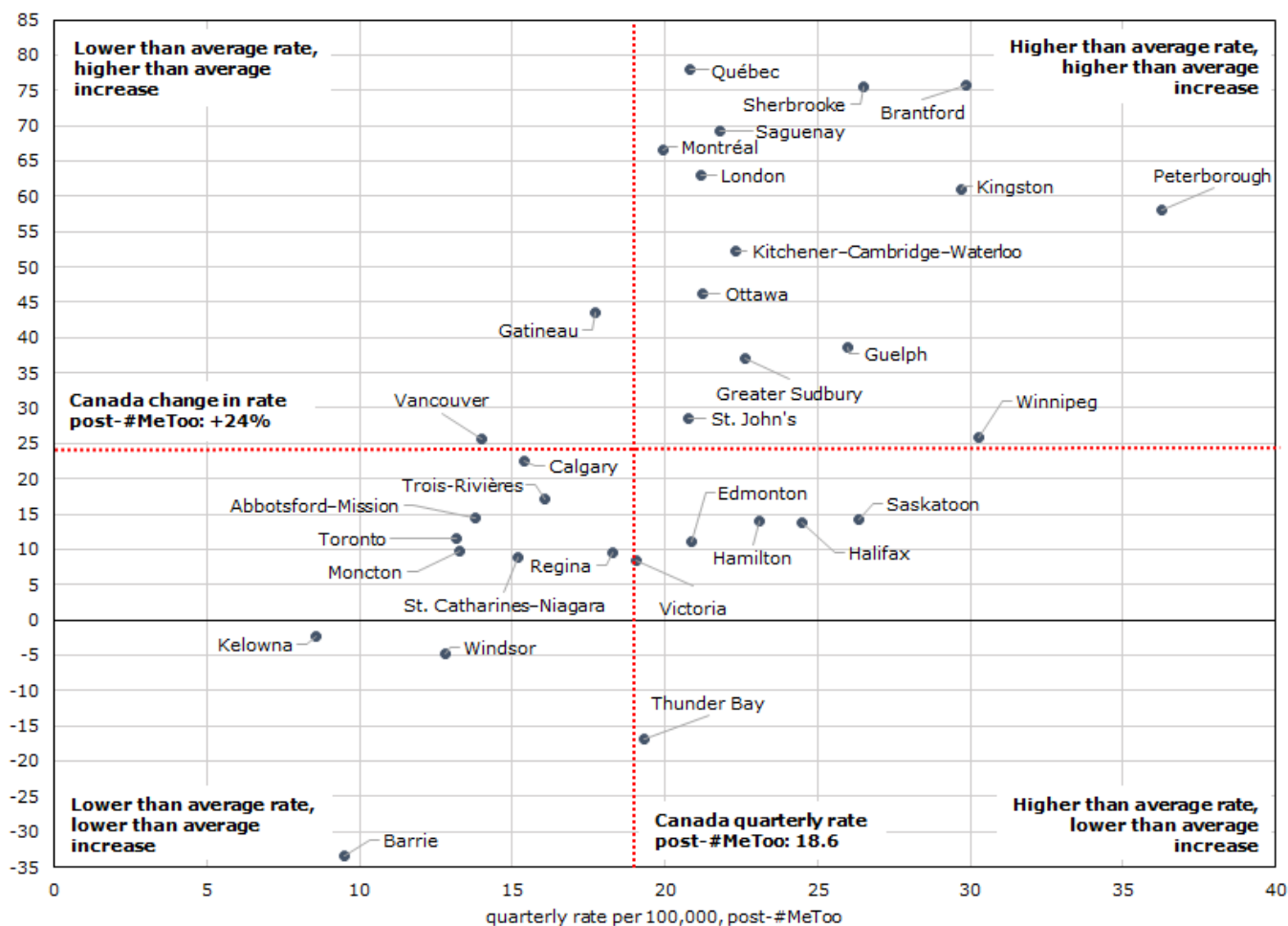
Police-reported sexual assaults increased in virtually all census metropolitan areas after #MeToo

Police-reported sexual assault rates varied across Canada's census metropolitan areas (CMAs)¹⁰ before and after #MeToo. At two times the national quarterly rate (18.6 per 100,000 population), Peterborough reported the highest rate of police-reported sexual assaults after #MeToo (36.3), followed by Winnipeg (30.3), Brantford (29.9), and Kingston (29.7) (Table 2).

Figure 1 shows both the post-#MeToo quarterly rate as well as the change compared to an average quarter prior to #MeToo, with CMAs in the upper right representing those that saw both considerable increases in police-reported sexual assaults and comparatively higher rates of sexual assault after #MeToo. Of note, nearly all CMAs reported an increase in rate of reported sexual assaults following #MeToo (Table 2; Figure 1). Barrie (-33%), Thunder Bay (-17%), Windsor (-5%), and Kelowna (-2%) were the exceptions.

Figure 1
Police-reported sexual assaults, by average quarterly #MeToo period and census metropolitan area, Canada, 2016 and 2017

percent change in rate, pre-#MeToo to post-#MeToo



Interpretation: This figure shows the quarterly rate of sexual assault post-#MeToo as well as the percent change compared to an average quarter in the 21 months before #MeToo and can be interpreted as such: rates move horizontally from lowest (left) to highest (right) and percent change moves vertically from lowest (bottom) to highest (top). For example, Peterborough reported a post-#MeToo rate of 36 sexual assaults per 100,000 population, which was 58% higher than their pre-#MeToo average quarterly rate.

Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Rates for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average rate across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo on the basis of 100,000 annual population figures, which means that rates will be lower than overall annual rates and thus are not comparable to annual sexual assault rates reported elsewhere. Populations are based upon July 1st annual estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division. Percent change in rate figures represent the percent change between the average quarterly rate of sexual assaults pre-#MeToo and the rate post-#MeToo. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%). Exercise caution when interpreting percent change in rates when base figures are low (see Table 2).

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Though Montréal's quarterly rate of sexual assaults was similar to the national rate (20.0 versus 18.6 per 100,000 population), there were considerable increases in reports in that CMA post-#MeToo. In the last three months of 2017, 821 victims of sexual assault came to the attention of police in Montréal, more than double the average number per quarter pre-#MeToo (331 victims). This translated to a 67% increase in quarterly rate of police-reported sexual assaults after #MeToo. Other CMAs in Quebec saw even larger increases: Québec City (+78%), Sherbrooke (+76%), and Saguenay (+69%). Outside of Quebec, the Ontario CMA of Brantford also saw a considerable increase (+76%).

It is important to consider that increases in rates of sexual assault following #MeToo may not be an indication of an increase in the prevalence of sexual assault, but rather a reflection of changes in reporting behaviours and police classifications, coding practices, or new initiatives. For example, in October 2017, the Montréal Police Service implemented a dedicated hotline for reporting sexual assaults in the wake of #MeToo and high-profile accusations of sexual assault and harassment, both internationally and within Quebec. Other police services in Quebec also urged victims to come forward around this time (Laframboise 2017). These factors likely influenced the high volume of sexual assaults reported to police in late 2017, thereby contributing to the high percent changes in rates in the Quebec CMAs shown in Figure 1.

Sexual assault rates slightly higher in rural areas, but greater increase in urban areas after #MeToo

Overall, in 2016 and 2017, there were more victims of sexual assault in Canada’s urban areas than in rural areas, as urban areas contain a larger proportion of the Canadian population.^{11, 12} When population figures were taken into account, the average quarterly rate of sexual assault was slightly higher in rural Canada, whether before (19.2 versus 14.0 per 100,000 population) or after #MeToo (21.5 versus 17.8). However, the increase in rate of reported sexual assaults in urban areas was more than double that of rural areas after #MeToo, with rural quarterly rates increasing by 12% and urban quarterly rates by 27%.

Text box 3 Unfounded sexual assaults

Media and police response

Before the #MeToo movement went viral on social media, a national discussion surrounding unfounded sexual assaults took place in Canada in early 2017. In February, The Globe and Mail released an article on sexual assaults that were being classified as ‘unfounded’ by police – that is, deemed not a crime¹³ (Doolittle 2017). Several police services subsequently announced they would be reviewing unfounded sexual assault cases and changing their approach to the classification of all types of reported incidents moving forward. Along with more victims coming forward after #MeToo, changes at the police policy level may have also had an impact on the increased number of sexual assaults reported by police in 2017.

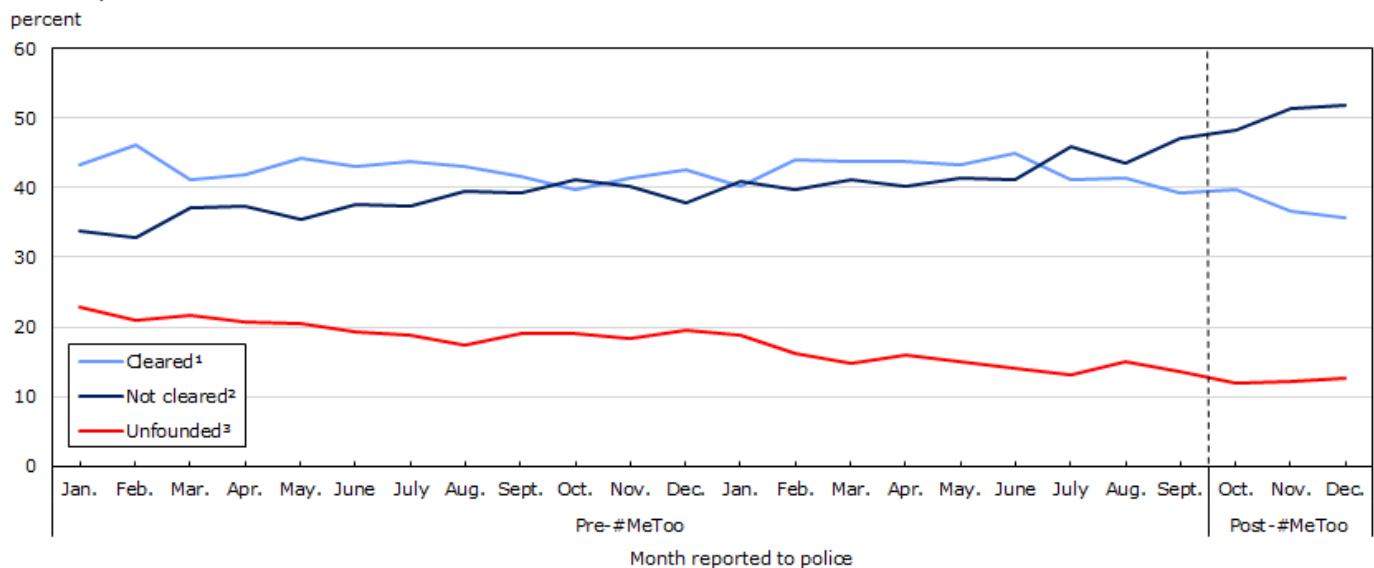
For more information on the revision efforts of unfounded data, see “Revising the classification of founded and unfounded criminal incidents in the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey” (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 2018). For data related to 2017 unfounded criminal incidents, including sexual assault and other crime types, see Greenland and Cotter (2018).

Unfounded sexual assaults declined while unsolved cases increased after #MeToo

Overall, in 2016 and 2017, 15% of all violent crimes reported to police were classified as unfounded – in other words, it had been determined through police investigation that a crime did not take place, nor was it attempted. This was the case for just under one in five (17%) sexual assault incidents (19% in 2016 and 14% in 2017). The proportion of sexual assaults deemed unfounded by police began declining beginning in February of 2017, the same month that the unfounded article was released by The Globe and Mail. The proportion of unfounded sexual assaults continued to decline steadily over the remainder of 2017 (Text box 3 chart).

Text box 3 chart

Founded and unfounded police-reported sexual assaults, by clearance status and month reported to police, Canada, 2016 and 2017



1. Incidents that were cleared by police (i.e., solved) by means of 1) laying or recommending a charge be laid on an accused, or 2) clearing the case by other means (includes, in order of frequency, the following reasons: victim declined to lay charge, beyond the control of department, departmental discretionary, accused was under 12 years old, accused referred to diversionary program, death of accused, or other reason).

2. Incidents where no accused was identified in connection with the incident (i.e., unsolved).

3. Incidents where it was determined through police investigation that a crime did not take place, nor was it attempted.

Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Counts are based on the number of founded and unfounded incidents where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Text box 3 — end

Unfounded sexual assaults

A decline was also noted in the proportion of sexual assaults that were cleared (i.e., solved),¹⁴ towards the end of 2017, particularly after #MeToo – from 43% pre- to 37% post-#MeToo. Declines in cleared and unfounded sexual assaults coincided with a rise in incidents that were not cleared – that is, cases that have not been solved or where no accused was formally identified (whether by police or by the victim) in connection with the incident – from 40% to 50% after #MeToo.

In all, the quarterly numbers before and after #MeToo show that changes in clearance status proportions were largely the result of fewer cases being classified as unfounded (-19%) and more incidents being unsolved (+49%). As a result of these changes, the proportion of cases solved by police declined (from 43% to 37%) despite seeing a 3% increase in the average quarterly number of solved cases post-#MeToo (from 2,659 to 2,738).

Changes in police practices explain some of these shifts, given that when more sexual assaults are founded, a lower proportion may be solved as a result (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 2018). In other words, the change in criteria for what constitutes a founded sexual assault may mean an increase in cases with less evidence required to lay a criminal charge. Cases that would have been previously classified as unfounded are now being founded, but consequently, proportionally more are going unsolved.

The classification of more sexual assaults as founded at the police level may have also contributed to the overall increase in police-reported sexual assaults in 2017. That said, the magnitude of the increase in late 2017 is too large to be explained by the shift in police crime classification practices that began in early 2017.

Charge rate for sexual assaults declined after #MeToo as fewer accused were identified by police

Among sexual assaults that were founded by police in 2016 or 2017 (representing 83% of incidents – see Text box 3)¹⁵ the proportion of incidents resulting in charges declined after #MeToo from 36% to 29%. It is important to note that in order to lay a criminal charge, at least one accused must have been identified in connection with the crime and there must be sufficient evidence against the accused to substantiate it.¹⁶ Even when an accused is charged with sexual assault, other research has found that the case often does not go to court or result in criminal conviction, especially when the crime was reported long after it took place or where certain information about the crime was missing (Rotenberg 2017b).

With fewer sexual assaults resulting in charges, there were more cases going unclear. Of founded sexual assaults, under half (47%) had been classified as not cleared before #MeToo, increasing to more than half (56%) after #MeToo. When an incident is founded but not cleared, it can mean that while there was evidence that a crime occurred, there was no accused person identified in connection with the crime. Overall, the proportion of sexual assault victims with an identified accused in the case was lower after #MeToo (44% versus 53%).¹⁷

While the proportion of incidents resulting in charges declined and a smaller proportion of incidents had an identified accused person, when only sexual assaults with identified accused persons are considered, the charge rate was in fact the same before and after #MeToo (both 66%). The decline in charge rate at the policing level coincides with the increase in founded but unsolved sexual assaults, which is related to a shift in police reporting practices after national attention on unfounded sexual assaults (Text box 3). A lower charge rate after #MeToo may also be explained in-part by police having a shorter time frame to update the clearance status in longer investigations before the data was sent to Statistics Canada. The increase in historical cases previously noted may have also been a factor, as these cases are less likely to be cleared by charge.

Severity of reported sexual assaults remained the same after #MeToo

While the degree of seriousness of a sexual assault is not something police-reported data alone can speak to, physical injury to the victim, the presence of a weapon, and the level of sexual assault (1, 2, or 3) reported by police can be useful in providing some insight on the severity of the incident. One in four sexual assaults resulted in physical injury to the victim, both before #MeToo (24%) and after #MeToo (23%). The vast majority of these (98%) constituted minor physical injuries that typically did not require medical attention. A weapon was present in a minority (4%) of police-reported sexual assaults in both time periods. Both before and after #MeToo, the vast majority (98%) of sexual assaults were classified by police as level 1 offences, which typically involves violations of a sexual nature without a weapon or evidence of bodily harm (Table 3).¹⁸ The remaining 2% of sexual assaults were level 2 or 3 offences, which consist of sexual assaults with a weapon, causing or threatening to cause bodily harm, or endangering the life of the victim.

Nine in ten victims of police-reported sexual assault were female

Regardless of time period, and as has been the case historically, the vast majority of victims of police-reported sexual assault were women or girls (89%) (Table 3). In the last three months of 2017, police reported that 6,043 women and girls were victims of sexual assault, 25% more than the average quarter pre-#MeToo (4,840). Though men represented far fewer victims, there was likewise a 25% increase in the number of male victims post-#MeToo (723, compared with 578 in an average quarter pre-#MeToo).

Rate of police-reported sexual assaults highest for young women and girls between 12 and 24 years old

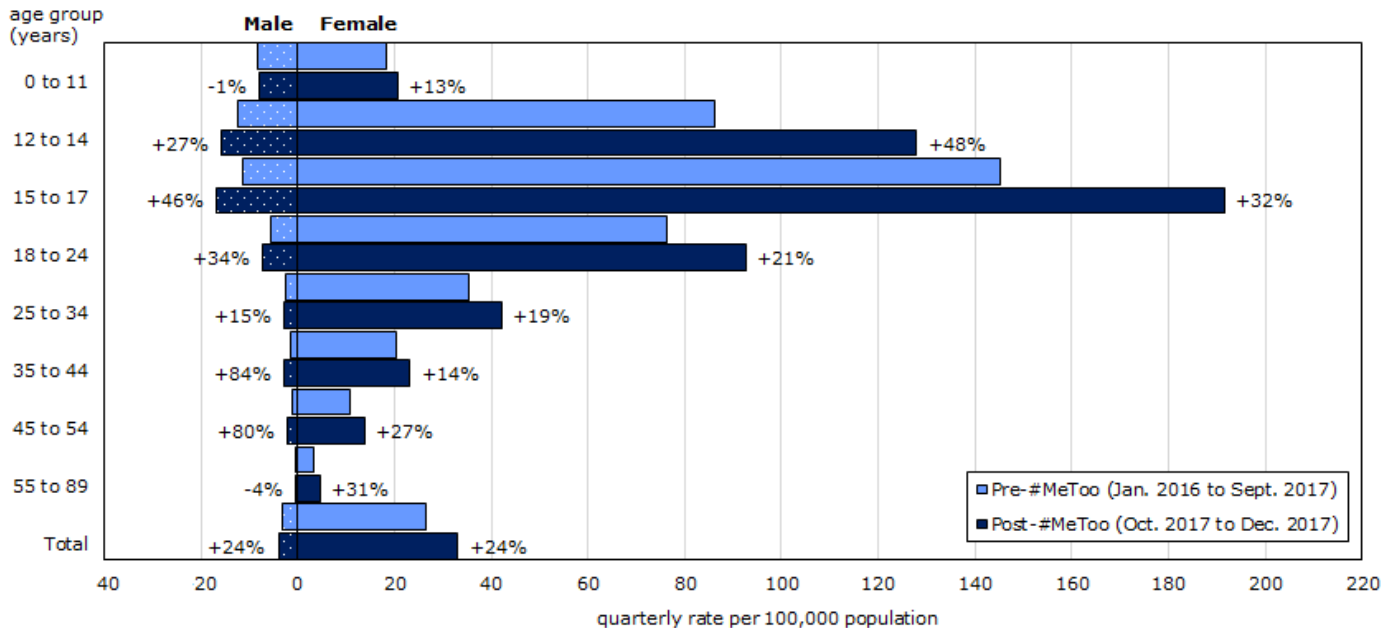
Overall, victims of sexual assault were disproportionately young women and girls. Over half (55%) of sexual assault victims in 2016 and 2017 were females under 25 years of age, a proportion which was similar before and after #MeToo.

Young girls aged 15 to 17 had the highest quarterly rates of sexual assault both before and after #MeToo (Chart 4). Girls aged 12 to 14 were victims of sexual assault at an average quarterly rate of 86.2 per 100,000 population before #MeToo, increasing by 48% to 127.9 after #MeToo. Quarterly rates for girls aged 15 to 17 similarly increased from 145.3 to 191.5 (+32%), as did rates for young women between 18 and 24 years old, from 76.4 to 92.6 (+21%). Despite continuing to have relatively low rates, rates for older male victims between 35 and 54 years old nearly doubled after #MeToo (from 1.3 to 2.4 per 100,000 population) (see Table 4).

Chart 4

Average quarterly rate of police-reported sexual assaults, by #MeToo period and victim sex and age group, Canada, 2016 and 2017

Victim sex and age group (years)

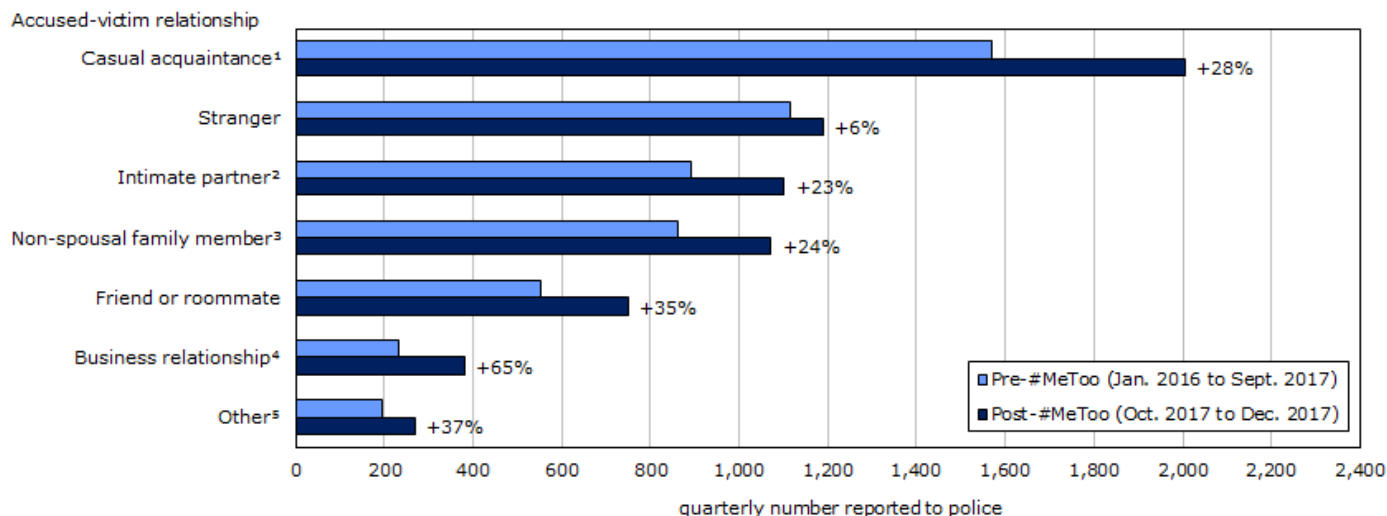


Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Percent change rates represent the percent change between the average quarterly rate of sexual assaults pre-#MeToo and the rate post-#MeToo. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. Rates for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average rate across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo on the basis of 100,000 annual population figures, which means that rates will be lower than overall annual rates and thus are not comparable to annual sexual assault rates reported elsewhere. Populations are based upon July 1st annual estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%). Exercise caution when interpreting percent change in rates when base figures are low (see Table 4).
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Bigger increase in sexual assaults after #MeToo committed by someone known to the victim than by a stranger

Police-reported sexual assaults involving all types of perpetrators increased after #MeToo (Table 3; Chart 5). Four in five victims knew their assailant, both before (79%) and after #MeToo (82%). Even in cases where police had not officially identified an accused in connection with the crime, the majority of victims knew the person accused of sexually assaulting them (72% pre- and 79% post-#MeToo). Both before and after #MeToo, 16% of police-reported sexual assaults involved a current or former intimate partner and another 16% involved a family member other than a spouse.

Chart 5
Average quarterly number of police-reported sexual assaults, by accused-victim relationship and #MeToo period, Canada, 2016 and 2017



1. A social relationship which is neither long-term nor close; includes neighbours and other acquaintances known by sight only.
 2. Includes spouses, separated/divorced partners, boyfriend or girlfriends, ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriends, and any other intimate relationship types.
 3. Includes parents or step-parents, children or step-children, other immediate family and extended family of the victim.
 4. Includes relationships in which the workplace or business involved is the primary source of contact (e.g., co-workers, employees or employers, service providers, patrons, or clients of public services).
 5. Includes criminal relationships and persons in authoritative positions.
Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Percent change numbers represent the percent change between the average quarterly number of victims of sexual assault pre-#MeToo and the number of victims post-#MeToo. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. Average quarterly figures for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average number of victims per quarter across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%). Exercise caution when interpreting percent change figures when base figures are low (see Table 3).
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Sexual assaults committed by a stranger saw the smallest increase (+6%) between the number of incidents reported in the three months following #MeToo (1,188) and the average quarterly number reported to police before #MeToo (1,116). Larger increases in reporting after #MeToo were seen among sexual assaults involving a friend or roommate of the victim (+35%), followed by casual acquaintances (+28%). Though business relationships represented a small proportion of sexual assaults (6% post-#MeToo), they saw the largest increase in reports after #MeToo (+65%) (Table 3). Business relationships can include sexual assaults perpetrated by co-workers, service providers, or patrons or clients of public services.

More historical sexual assaults against girls reported after #MeToo, males victimized by a family member reporting sooner

Sexual assaults tend to take longer to be reported to police when the victim knew their assailant (especially as a family member), and when the victim was a child (Rotenberg 2017a). As noted above, after #MeToo, there was an increase in sexual assaults reported to police that had occurred more than one year prior. This increase was largely driven by sexual assaults against young girls.

After #MeToo, 14% of all reported sexual assaults against a female had occurred over a year before they were brought to the attention of police. But for those who were under 12 when the incident occurred, nearly half (48%) were reported at least a year after the incident. This represents an increase in reporting of historical sexual assaults (from 38% pre-#MeToo), larger than that for female victims overall (from 11% to 14%). Though less frequent in volume, sexual assaults against young boys were also more likely to have long delays in reporting, but there was no increase in reporting of historical cases after #MeToo.

After #MeToo, sexual assaults committed by a family member against boys and men were reported to police sooner after they happened. Specifically, the proportion of males victimized by a family member who reported on the same or day following the sexual assault increased from 44% to 49% after #MeToo, in contrast to a decrease in same-or-next-day reporting among males victimized by someone outside the family (from 53% to 50%). This shift was even more pronounced among boys under 12.

Increase in sexual assault reports at schools, bars, and restaurants after #MeToo

Both pre- and post-#MeToo, around three in five (62% and 61% respectively) sexual assaults reported to police took place on private property.¹⁹ Incidents which occurred at a school, college, or university represented a small proportion of all incidents reported to police in 2016 or 2017 (5%). Nonetheless, incidents in these locations saw considerable increases after #MeToo, with sexual assaults on school, college, or university property nearly doubling (+87%) compared with the average number reported per quarter before #MeToo (439 versus 235 incidents). Because school attendance is seasonal the post-#MeToo period of October to December 2017 was also compared to the last three months of 2016 to control for seasonality in the data. A 59% increase in number of reported sexual assaults was observed, still making it one of the top types of sexual assault that saw a marked increase in reports after #MeToo.

Coinciding with the largest increases being observed among 12- to 17-year-old victims, the bulk of sexual assault incidents on school property (93% pre-#MeToo and 95% after) took place on non-postsecondary school grounds, most often during supervised activity, rather than at a college or university.²⁰ Sexual assaults at a bar or restaurant were 46% higher after #MeToo than in an average quarter before #MeToo, though they still represented a small proportion of all reported sexual assaults (3% post-#MeToo) (Table 3).

Recently, attention to sexual violence on college and university campuses has increased, with many institutional and student-led task forces raising concerns and responding to high-profile incidents (Our Turn 2017; University of Ottawa n.d.). In Ontario, the *Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act* mandates that all colleges and universities have a sexual violence policy that addresses sexual violence involving students and outlines the process for responding to incidents and complaints (Bill 132 2016). Many schools below the post-secondary level have also introduced prevention programs, and as was the case with #MeToo, increased levels of awareness surrounding sexual assault and sexual violence may have had an impact on reporting practices.

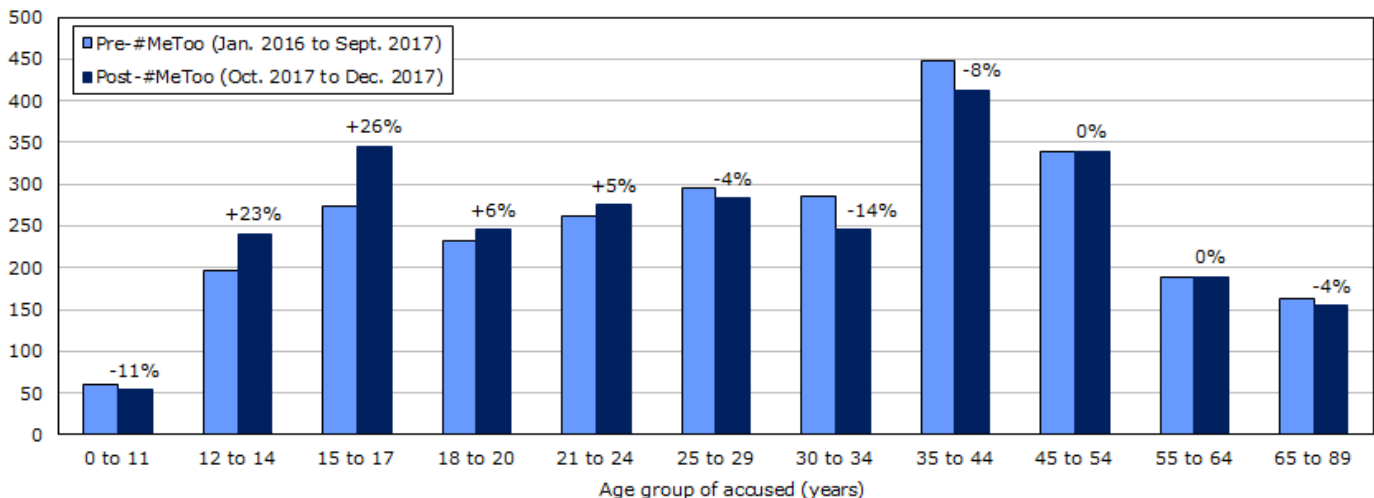
Increase in youth accused of sexual assault after #MeToo

In about half of sexual assault incidents, police had identified an accused person in connection with the crime (53% for pre- and 44% for post-#MeToo). Police identified 2,788 persons who were accused of sexual assault during the three-month period after #MeToo, which was slightly higher than the average quarterly number of accused persons before #MeToo (2,744). The largest increases in number of accused persons after #MeToo were noted among younger offenders, specifically 12-to-14 year olds (+23%) and 15-to-17 year olds (+26%) (Chart 6).

Chart 6

Average quarterly number of persons accused of sexual assault, by accused age group and #MeToo period, Canada, 2016 and 2017

quarterly number of accused



Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Percent change numbers represent the percent change between the average quarterly number of sexual assaults involving an accused of a given age group pre- and post-#MeToo. Counts are based on the number of accused in an incident where the most serious violation was sexual assault. Average quarterly figures for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average number of accused per quarter across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the accused was unknown or over 89 years of age (3%). Exercise caution when interpreting percent change figures when base figures are low.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Sexual assaults perpetrated by a youth aged 12 to 17 represented 17% of cases before #MeToo, increasing to 21% after #MeToo. This was largely attributed to the previously noted increases in sexual assaults of 12-to 17-year old girls, where the accused was often a youth or young adult male.

With the increases in both youth victims and youth accused, the age gap between the victim and the accused narrowed among sexual assaults reported by police after #MeToo. The proportion of victims sexually assaulted by someone in their peer age group (within five years) increased from 46% to 52%, while victimization at the hands of someone six or more years older declined. This shift was true for both female and male victims.

Regardless of time period, virtually all persons accused of sexual assault in 2016 or 2017 were male (97% before #MeToo, and 96% after).

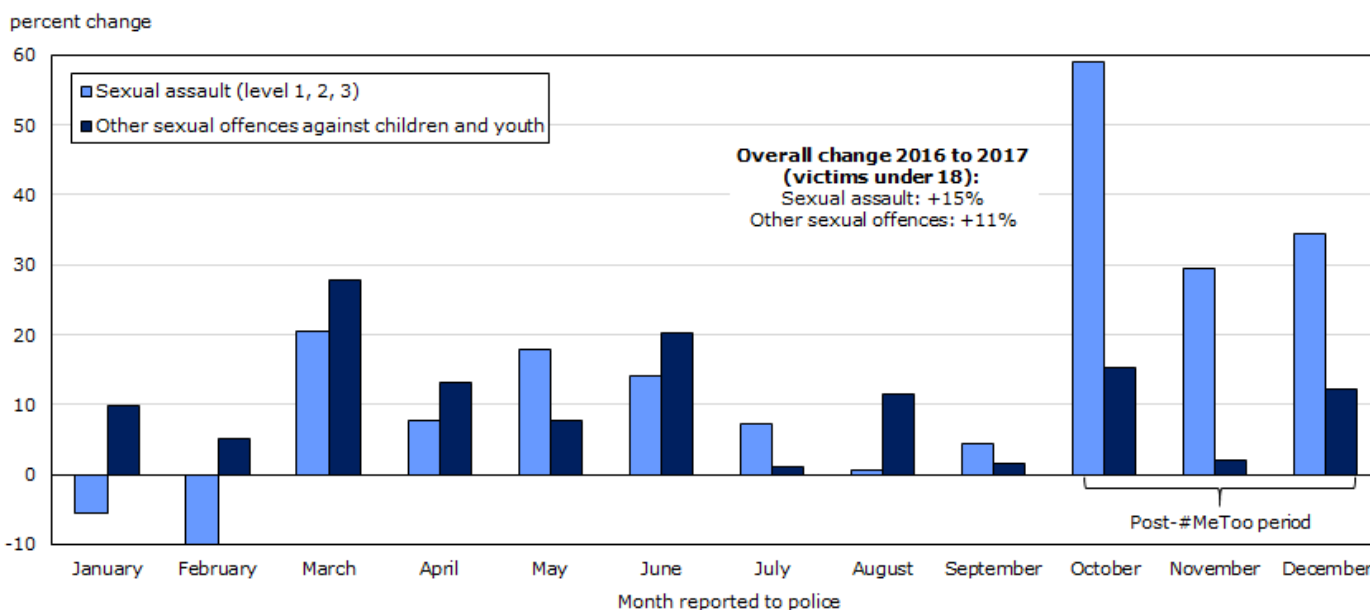
Text box 4 Impact of #MeToo on crimes other than sexual assault

The present study is focused on level 1, 2 and 3 sexual assaults. However, there are several other *Criminal Code* offences that may have been impacted by #MeToo, such as other sexual offences specific to the sexual exploitation or victimization of children and youth under 18 years old,²¹ as well as harassment or threat-related offences.

Over 2016 and 2017, there were 13,453 child or youth victims of a police-reported sexual offence other than sexual assault, with sexual interference the most frequent offence. This represented just under half (44%) of all crimes of a sexual nature²² committed against a child or youth under 18 years old over the two-year period, with the other 56% being sexual assault (level 1, 2 or 3) offences.²³

Unlike with sexual assaults against victims under 18, there was no marked increase in other sexual offences against children and youth reported by police after #MeToo (Text box 4 chart 1). Rather, there were just as many other sexual offences against children and youth reported in the three months after #MeToo as there were in the three months leading up to it. By contrast, the number of reported sexual assaults against a victim under 18 years old had gone up 39% after #MeToo compared with the preceding three months.

Text box 4 chart 1
Percent change in number of child and youth victims of police-reported sexual assault versus other sexual offences, by month reported to police, Canada, 2017 compared with 2016



Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Other sexual offences against children and youth include, in order of frequency: sexual interference, luring a child via computer, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, making sexually explicit material available to a child, householder permitting sexual activity, and parent or guardian procuring sexual activity. The report date is the date when the incident became known by the police or was reported to the police. Reporting a crime to police can be done by any party, including the victim, a parent or guardian, or another third party. Percent change numbers represent the percent change between the number of victims of sexual assault reported in a given month in 2016 and the same month in 2017. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault or one of the other sexual offences against children and youth. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%), or where the victim was 18 years of age or older.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

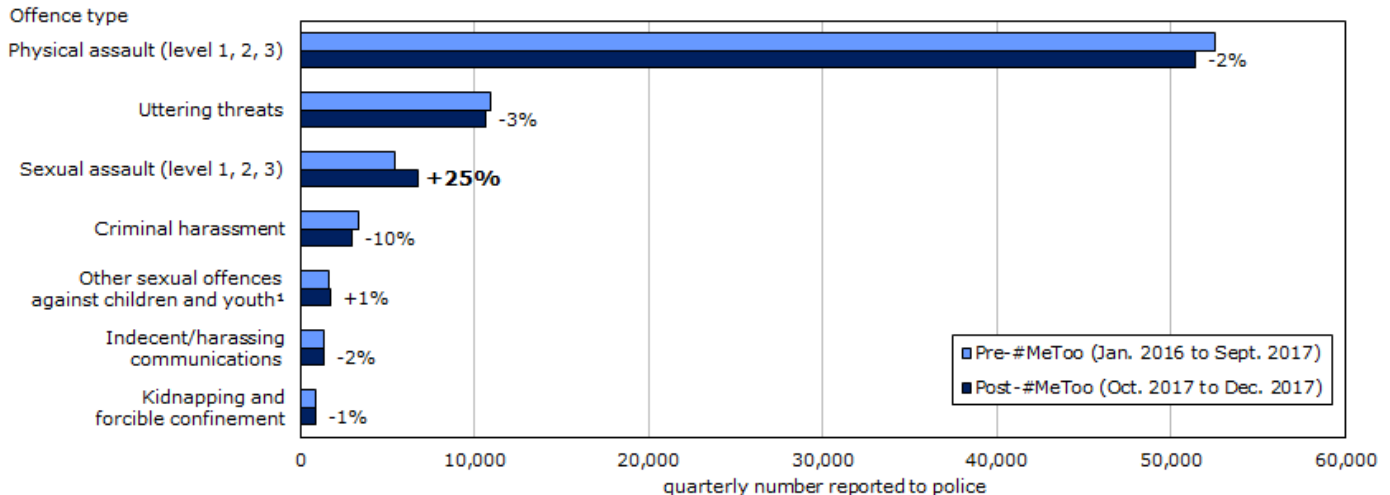
Text box 4 — end

Impact of #MeToo on crimes other than sexual assault

Other criminal offences were also explored to see whether there was an increase of reports after #MeToo. Police-reported data showed no meaningful increase in reported crimes for selected offence types, including criminal harassment, indecent/harassing communications, and uttering threats (Text box 4 Chart 2).

Text box 4 chart 2

Average quarterly number of victims of police-reported violent crimes, by offence type and #MeToo period, Canada, 2016 and 2017



1. Includes, in order of frequency: sexual interference, luring a child via computer, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, making sexually explicit material available to a child, householder permitting sexual activity, and parent or guardian procuring sexual activity.

Note: Percent change numbers represent the percent change between the average quarterly number of victims of a given offence type pre-#MeToo and the number of victims post-#MeToo. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was the specified offence. Average quarterly figures for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average number of victims per quarter across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as crimes reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%).

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Summary

Data from Canadian police services suggest that the #MeToo movement coincided with a substantial increase in the number of police-reported sexual assaults, with reports peaking in October of 2017, marking a 46% increase from October of the previous year.

#MeToo had a clear impact on the reporting of sexual assaults in some regions. Provincially, Quebec – where there was significant media attention, prominent figures accused of sexual misconduct, and where many police services introduced dedicated hotlines for reporting sexual assault—saw the largest increase in reported sexual assaults. Newfoundland and Labrador and Manitoba also saw notable increases. Although sexual assault rates were consistently higher in rural areas, urban areas saw an increase in reports after #MeToo that was more than double that of rural Canada.

Typically, sexual assaults reported to police before and after #MeToo had taken place somewhat recently rather than a long time in the past, though there was an increase in the number and proportion of cases reported to police that were over a decade old. No changes in the severity of sexual assaults reported to police were observed after #MeToo, as most sexual assaults continued to be level 1 offences with less than one in four victims suffering physical injuries.

As was the case before #MeToo, the majority of victims of police-reported sexual assault were female, with young women and girls in particular having the highest rates as well as the largest increases after #MeToo. An increase in younger accused persons, largely close in age to the victim, was also noted after #MeToo.

Police-reported sexual assaults that occurred at a school, college, or university, as well as those involving a friend, roommate, or someone with whom the victim had a business relationship increased after #MeToo.

It is important to recall that an increase in number of police-reported sexual assaults does not necessarily signify an increase in the actual prevalence of sexual assault in Canada, as the data used for this article are based on sexual assaults reported to and classified as founded by police. Based on the most recent available data, only one in twenty sexual assaults were reported to police in 2014 (Conroy and Cotter 2017). Further, 17% of sexual assaults reported to police in 2016 and 2017 were classified as unfounded. For these reasons, the number of victims of sexual assault reported in this study do not capture the true volume of sexual victimization in Canada. That said, they do point to increases in sexual assaults reported by police after #MeToo.

The increase in sexual assaults reported by police after #MeToo is likely best explained by a combination of factors:

1. Victims may have had more sources of support and encouragement to report a sexual assault to police, given the shift in conversations surrounding supporting victims and the sharing nature of the #MeToo hashtag itself.
2. Victims may have been more inclined to identify or recognize that they had been sexually assaulted after becoming more aware of what constitutes a sexual assault, which may have increased the likelihood of reporting an incident, whether it occurred recently or in the past.
3. More police services were encouraging victims of sexual assault to come forward and assuring their support of victims, whether through their own social media channels or in larger-scale projects such as the implementation of sexual violence reporting hotlines. The publicizing of large-scale reviews of past unfounded sexual assault cases by a number of police services may have also served as a sign of support for victims.
4. Many police services recently committed to the revision of what constitutes an 'unfounded' sexual assault. Statistics Canada and police services across Canada worked together to develop a new and uniform approach for classifying incidents as unfounded or founded (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 2018). Although the adoption of the new coding structure is still underway in 2018, police services may have already begun implementing new policies or practices as early as 2017 wherein more sexual assaults may be reported as founded than were previously.

A central outstanding question that cannot be definitively answered by police-reported data is to what extent the rise in sexual assault numbers signifies an increased willingness of victims to report to police. Data collection for the next General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization²⁴ is planned for 2019. The results of this national survey of Canadians will be able to determine whether there has been a shift in reporting behaviours in the post-#MeToo era. Moving forward, future research using data from police services will also be important in analyzing the longer-term impacts of #MeToo on police-reported sexual assaults beyond the last three months of 2017.

Survey description

Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey

The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey collects detailed information on criminal incidents that have been reported by Canadian police services, and permits analysis by the date the incident was reported to police. The data includes characteristics pertaining to founded criminal incidents (e.g., weapon use, location, delay in reporting), victims (e.g., age, sex, victim-accused relationship, physical injury) and accused persons (e.g., age, sex, charges laid). In 2016 and 2017, data from police services covered 99% of the population of Canada. Incidents are based on UCR microdata for pre- and post-#MeToo periods as defined by this study, and will not match data from CANSIM tables as these capture annual aggregate-based data.

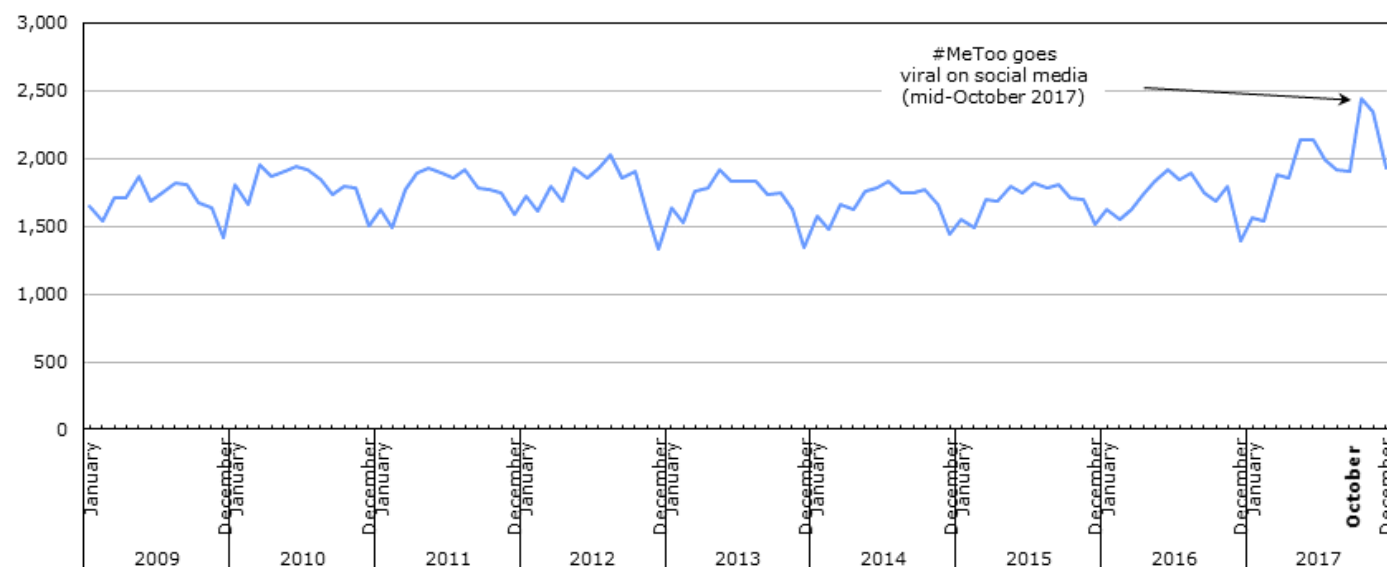
In 2017, the collection and dissemination of unfounded criminal incidents through the UCR Survey was reinstated (see Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 2018). Data on unfounded incidents include details on the type of violation, the date the incident was reported to police, and the clearance status (unfounded). Other incident, victim, or accused characteristics that are available through the UCR for founded incidents are not reported or available for unfounded incidents. 2017 data on unfounded incidents may still be subject to inconsistent reporting and therefore be incomparable across police services, as police services implement new standards of classification throughout 2018.

Appendix

Appendix chart

Victims of police-reported sexual assault, by month reported to police, Canada, 2016 and 2017

number of victims



Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. This chart does not take into account changes in population counts. The report date is the date when the incident became known by the police or was reported to the police. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%).

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

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Notes

1. Estimate has a coefficient of variation of 16.6% to 33.3%. This estimate should therefore be used with caution.
2. According to the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey definition in effect in 2017, an incident was deemed 'unfounded' "if it has been determined through police investigation that the offence reported did not occur, nor was it attempted and therefore no violations of the *Criminal Code* or other federal statute took place at that time or location" (Statistics Canada 2016). For more information on more recent revisions to unfounded definitions, see "Revising the classification of founded and unfounded criminal incidents in the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey" (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 2018).
3. Level 1 sexual assaults typically involve violations of a sexual nature without a weapon or evidence of bodily harm, such as unwanted touching or other non-consensual bodily contact for sexual purposes. Level 1 sexual assaults account for the vast majority (98%) of all sexual assaults reported and founded by police in 2016 and 2017. Level 2 sexual assaults account for 2%, and involve a weapon, bodily harm, or threats to cause bodily harm. Level 3 offences account for less than 1% of sexual assaults, and involve wounding, maiming, disfiguring or endangering the life of the victim.
4. Data beyond this period was not available at the time of writing, but should be considered in future studies in order to explore the longer-term impacts of #MeToo on police-reported sexual assaults.
5. Victims are used as a unit of count for the majority of this paper in order to allow for analysis of victim characteristics. This includes victims in incidents where the most serious offence was a sexual assault. Over 2016 and 2017 combined, there were 42,386 sexual assault incidents and 44,690 victims. Note that there may be more than one victim in a criminal incident, and a victim involved in more than one incident.
6. An average quarterly number before #MeToo represents the average of the seven calendar quarters in the pre-#MeToo period (January 1, 2016 to September, 30 2017). Note that comparing the average quarterly figures for pre-#MeToo to post-#MeToo figures yields more conservative percent increases in the number of victims (+25%) than comparing only the last quarter of 2016 to post-#MeToo would (+38%). Given that a large part of the analysis in this study required disaggregating by age, sex, or incident characteristics, the pooling of seven quarters of data provided a larger baseline number of sexual assault incidents and less overall variability in proportions as a result.
7. The delay in reporting is measured using the time elapsed between the date the incident occurred and the date it was reported to police. The incident date is the date when the crime is known or believed to have occurred. The report date is the date when the incident became known by the police or was reported to the police. Reporting a crime to police can be done by any party, including the victim, a parent or guardian, or another third party.
8. Median delays in reporting data is based on sexual assaults reported to police at least one day after the incident took place. Median figures are used instead of averages to better control for outliers.
9. In order to deduce rates of sexual assault for the post-#MeToo period which spanned three months from October 1 to December 31, 2017, quarterly rates were used in place of the routine annual crime rates typically reported by Statistics Canada. Rates for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average rate across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo on the basis of 100,000 annual population figures, while rates for the post-#MeToo period represent the rate for that quarter. This means that rates will be lower than overall annual rates and thus are not comparable to annual sexual assault rates reported elsewhere.
10. A census metropolitan area (CMA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more must live in the core. To be included in a CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core as measured by commuting flows derived from previous census place of work data, where 50% or more of the population commutes into the core.
11. Rural areas are where the majority of the population lives outside of a census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA). Urban areas are where the majority of the population lives within a CMA or CA. In 2017, 17% of Canada's population was served by rural police services (Allen 2018).
12. Over 2016 and 2017, there were 35,320 victims of sexual assault in Canada's urban areas (representing 79% of all victims of sexual assault), and 9,370 victims in rural areas.
13. Prior to 2018, an incident was defined as unfounded if it was "determined through police investigation that the offence reported did not occur, nor was it attempted." An updated definition for founded incidents was provided in January 2018: "An incident is founded if, after police investigation, it has been determined that the reported offence did occur or was attempted

(even if the accused is unknown) or if there was no credible evidence to confirm that the reported incident did not take place” (see Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 2018). Given the recent revision to unfounded definitions and data collection, the present study does not use the new definition of unfounded, but rather the previous one.

14. Incidents that were cleared by police includes either: 1) laying or recommending a charge be laid on an accused, or 2) clearing the case by other means (includes, in order of frequency, the following reasons: victim declined to lay charge, beyond the control of department, departmental discretionary, accused was under 12 years old, accused referred to diversionary program, death of accused, or other reason).

15. In order to remain consistent with past reporting on charge rates for sexual assaults among other violent crimes, unfounded sexual assault incidents are excluded from this section. Base counts reflect the number of victims of a sexual assault incident that was reported to and founded by police.

16. The threshold for criminal conviction is not determined by police but rather by the criminal court system. Police are responsible only for laying a charge or recommending to the Crown that a charge be laid in jurisdictions that have pre-charge screening (British Columbia, Quebec, and New Brunswick), after which the case is referred to the courts. Evidence collected by police to lay or recommend the laying of a charge must pass the reasonable person test, which can include: confirmation from a reliable source, police information, admission of guilt, physical evidence or other substantiation of evidence. Police must have reasonable grounds to proceed and not simply a belief that the accused is responsible.

17. Based on victims in incidents where either a charge was laid or recommended to be laid on an accused or an accused was charged otherwise.

18. Note that the weapon and physical injury fields on the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey are not the same as the definition for sexual assault levels as laid out in the *Criminal Code*.

19. Includes a single home, a dwelling unit or a private property structure. Excludes incidents where the location type was reported as unknown (4%).

20. The number of police-reported sexual assaults occurring at a university or college is likely an underestimation of the number of sexual assaults reported to police that occur on university or college property, as these sexual assaults may be coded as having occurred at a more specific location type such as a private residence, dwelling unit, bar or restaurant, or other location which is on a college or university campus.

21. Other sexual offences against children include, most commonly: sexual interference (touching a person under the age of 16 years old for a sexual purpose), luring a child via a computer for sexual purposes, invitation to sexual touching (inviting, counseling or inciting a person under the age of 16), sexual exploitation (touching or inviting the touching of a person who is aged 16 or 17 for a sexual purpose if the accused is in a position of trust or authority toward the victim), and making sexually explicit material available to children.

22. Sexual offences included in this calculation: sexual assault level 1, 2 and 3; sexual interference; invitation to sexual touching; sexual exploitation; making sexually explicit material available to children; luring a child via a computer; parent or guardian procuring sexual activity, and householder permitting sexual activity. Excludes prostitution, commodification of sexual activity, or human trafficking offences.

23. In previous years, not examined in this article but published elsewhere, sexual assault represented a much larger proportion (around 70%) of crimes of a sexual nature committed against children or youth (Cotter and Beaupré 2014; Rotenberg 2017a). The recent shift is mostly explained by legislative changes to the *Criminal Code*, wherein maximum penalties for a number of sexual crimes against children increased and therefore had an impact on police coding of the most serious violation in an incident. In 2015, new legislation (*Bill C-26: Tougher Penalties for Child Predators Act*) increased the maximum penalty for a number of crimes of a sexual nature against children, including sexual interference, from 10 to 14 years. As a result, this maximum penalty was now higher than for sexual assault (10 years), meaning that if there was both a sexual interference and a sexual assault violation in an incident, the sexual interference offence would now become the most serious violation in the incident. Because reporting of Uniform Crime Reporting Survey data is based on the most serious violation in the incident, the data would show more sexual interference incidents.

24. The purpose of the General Social Survey (GSS) is to provide data on Canadians’ personal experiences with eight offences, examine the risk factors associated with victimization, examine rates of reporting to the police, assess the nature and extent of spousal violence, measure fear of crime, and examine public perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system. The target population was persons aged 15 and older living in the Canadian provinces and territories. For recent research on self-reported sexual assaults utilizing survey data from the GSS on Canadians’ Safety (Victimization), see Conroy and Cotter (2017).

Detailed data tables

Table 1
Victims of police-reported sexual assault, by quarterly #MeToo period and province or territory, Canada, 2016 and 2017

Province and territory	Pre-#MeToo (Jan. 2016 to Sept. 2017)		Post-#MeToo (Oct. 2017 to Dec. 2017)		Percent change in rate (pre- to post-#MeToo)
	number	average rate	number	rate	percent
Newfoundland and Labrador	536	14.5	104	19.8	36
Prince Edward Island	128	12.2	19	12.6	3
Nova Scotia	1,185	18.0	195	20.6	15
New Brunswick	648	12.3	101	13.4	9
Quebec	7,199	12.4	1,665	20.0	61
Ontario	13,856	14.2	2,377	16.9	19
Manitoba	2,396	26.0	438	33.0	27
Saskatchewan	2,030	25.3	294	25.5	1
Alberta	4,969	16.8	761	17.9	7
British Columbia	4,294	12.9	718	15.0	16
Yukon	135	50.6	16	41.7	-18
Northwest Territories	273	87.7	35	78.8	-10
Nunavut	275	104.8	43	113.2	8
Canada	37,924	15.0	6,766	18.6	24

Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. Rates for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average rate across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo on the basis of 100,000 annual population figures, which means that rates will be lower than overall annual rates and thus are not comparable to annual sexual assault rates reported elsewhere. Populations are based upon July 1st annual estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%). Exercise caution when interpreting rates and percent change in rates when base figures for incidents are low.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 2
Victims of police-reported sexual assault, by quarterly #MeToo period and census metropolitan area, Canada, 2016 and 2017

Census metropolitan area (CMA) ¹	Pre-#MeToo (Jan. 2016 to Sept. 2017)		Post-#MeToo (Oct. 2017 to Dec. 2017)		Percent change in rate (pre- to post-#MeToo)
	number	average rate	number	rate	percent
Total CMAs²	24,298	13.7	4,528	17.7	29
St. John's	234	16.2	43	20.8	28
Halifax	640	21.5	105	24.5	14
Moncton	133	12.1	21	13.3	10
Saguenay	149	12.9	36	21.8	69
Québec	651	11.7	166	20.8	78
Sherbrooke	210	15.1	53	26.5	76
Trois-Rivières	149	13.7	25	16.1	17
Montréal	3,427	12.0	821	20.0	67
Gatineau ³	286	12.3	59	17.7	44
Ottawa ⁴	1,032	14.5	218	21.2	46
Kingston	216	18.5	50	29.7	61
Peterborough	198	23.0	45	36.3	58
Toronto ⁵	4,628	11.8	745	13.2	11
Hamilton ⁶	793	20.3	130	23.1	14
St. Catharines–Niagara	441	14.0	69	15.2	9
Kitchener–Cambridge–Waterloo	565	14.7	124	22.3	52
Brantford	174	17.0	44	29.9	76
Guelph	175	18.8	35	26.0	39
London	468	13.0	110	21.2	63
Windsor	314	13.5	43	12.8	-5
Barrie	218	14.3	21	9.5	-33
Greater Sudbury	189	16.5	37	22.6	37
Thunder Bay	194	23.2	23	19.3	-17
Winnipeg	1,337	24.0	243	30.3	26
Regina	290	16.7	46	18.3	10
Saskatoon	519	23.0	86	26.3	14
Calgary	1,296	12.6	229	15.4	23
Edmonton	1,822	18.8	292	20.9	11
Kelowna	121	8.8	17	8.6	-2
Abbotsford–Mission	158	12.0	26	13.8	14
Vancouver	1,976	11.1	357	14.0	26
Victoria	455	17.6	71	19.1	8

See notes at the end of the table.

Table 2 — end
Victims of police-reported sexual assault, by quarterly #MeToo period and census metropolitan area, Canada, 2016 and 2017

Census metropolitan area (CMA) ¹	Pre-#MeToo (Jan. 2016 to Sept. 2017)		Post-#MeToo (Oct. 2017 to Dec. 2017)		Percent change in rate (pre- to post-#MeToo)
	number	average rate	number	rate	percent
Total non-CMAs⁷	13,626	18.3	2,238	20.9	15
Urban areas	5,585	17.1	949	20.3	19
Rural and small town	8,041	19.2	1,289	21.5	12
Canada	37,924	15.0	6,766	18.6	24

1. A census metropolitan area (CMA) consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a major urban core. A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the urban core. To be included in the CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the central urban area, as measured by commuting flows derived from census data. A CMA typically comprises more than one police service. Census metropolitan area (CMA) populations have been adjusted to follow policing boundaries.

2. Includes incidents in selected CMAs that are not presented in the table due to the incongruity between the police service boundaries and the CMA boundaries. This includes: Saint John, Oshawa, and the areas of CMAs policed by Durham Regional Police Service and Halton Regional Police Service. As such, the individual CMA incident figures will not add up to the Total CMA figure.

3. Gatineau refers to the Quebec part of the Ottawa–Gatineau CMA.

4. Ottawa refers to the Ontario part of the Ottawa–Gatineau CMA.

5. Excludes the portions of Halton Regional Police Service and Durham Regional Police Service that police the Toronto census metropolitan area.

6. Excludes the portion of Halton Regional Police Service that polices the Hamilton census metropolitan area.

7. Non-CMAs consist of all other cities or townships outside of the identified list of CMAs in this table that do not qualify as CMAs based on population size and density. This includes over 900 cities or townships spread out across Canadian provinces and territories.

Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. Rates for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average rate across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo on the basis of 100,000 annual population figures, which means that rates will be lower than overall annual rates and thus are not comparable to annual sexual assault rates reported elsewhere. Populations are based upon July 1st annual estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%). Exercise caution when interpreting rates and percent change in rates when base figures for incidents are low.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 3
Victims of police-reported sexual assault, by selected characteristics, by quarterly #MeToo period, Canada, 2016 and 2017

Selected characteristics	Pre-#MeToo (Jan. 2016 to Sept. 2017)			Post-#MeToo (Oct. 2017 to Dec. 2017)		Percent change in quarterly number (pre- to post-#MeToo)
	number	average per quarter	percent (of total number)	number	percent	percent
Total sexual assaults	37,924	5,418	100.0	6,766	100.0	25
Sexual assault level 1	37,006	5,287	97.6	6,636	98.1	26
Sexual assault level 2	682	97	1.8	102	1.5	5
Sexual assault level 3	236	34	0.6	28	0.4	-17
Sex of victim						
Male	4,046	578	10.7	723	10.7	25
Female	33,878	4,840	89.3	6,043	89.3	25
Age of victim (years)						
0 to 11	4,330	619	11.4	674	10.0	9
12 to 17	10,169	1,453	26.8	2,000	29.6	38
18 to 24	9,342	1,335	24.6	1,628	24.1	22
25 to 34	6,705	958	17.7	1,148	17.0	20
35 to 44	3,726	532	9.8	636	9.4	19
45 to 54	2,128	304	5.6	398	5.9	31
55 to 64	911	130	2.4	162	2.4	24
65 to 89	613	88	1.6	120	1.8	37
Relationship between victim and accused						
Stranger	7,809	1,116	20.6	1,188	17.6	6
Casual acquaintance ¹	10,978	1,568	29.0	2,005	29.6	28
Intimate partner ²	6,248	893	16.5	1,102	16.3	23
Non-spousal family member ³	6,028	861	15.9	1,072	15.8	24
Friend or roommate	3,875	554	10.2	749	11.1	35
Business relationship ⁴	1,616	231	4.3	381	5.6	65
Other ⁵	1,370	196	3.6	269	4.0	37
Location of incident						
Private property ⁶	22,483	3,212	61.7	3,956	61.4	23
Open area ⁷	6,216	888	17.1	859	13.3	-3
Commercial area ⁸	2,932	419	8.1	538	8.3	28
School ⁹	1,646	235	4.5	439	6.8	87
Bar or restaurant ¹⁰	842	120	2.3	176	2.7	46
Other ¹¹	2,295	328	6.3	476	7.4	45

See notes at the end of the table.

Table 3 — end
Victims of police-reported sexual assault, by selected characteristics, by quarterly #MeToo period, Canada, 2016 and 2017

Selected characteristics	Pre-#MeToo (Jan. 2016 to Sept. 2017)		Post-#MeToo (Oct. 2017 to Dec. 2017)		Percent change in quarterly number (pre- to post-#MeToo)	
	number	average per quarter	percent (of total number)	number		percent
Physical injury to victim						
No physical injury	25,066	3,581	76.1	4,499	76.7	26
Minor physical injury ¹²	7,729	1,104	23.5	1,355	23.1	23
Major physical injury ¹³	125	18	0.4	14	0.2	-22
Weapon present during incident						
Yes ¹⁴	1,326	189	4.1	202	3.6	7
Physical force only	30,637	4,377	95.6	5,339	96.1	22
No weapon present	94	13	0.3	12	0.2	-11

1. A social relationship which is neither long-term nor close; includes neighbours and other acquaintances known by sight only.
 2. Includes spouses, separated/divorced partners, boyfriend or girlfriends, ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriends, and any other intimate relationship types.
 3. Includes parents or step-parents, children or step-children, other immediate family and extended family of the victim.
 4. Includes relationships in which the workplace or business involved is the primary source of contact (e.g., co-workers, employees or employers, service providers, patrons, or clients of public services).
 5. Includes criminal relationships and persons in authoritative positions.
 6. Includes a single home, a dwelling unit or a private property structure.
 7. Includes streets, roads or highways, parking lots, transit bus/bus shelters, subway/subway stations, other public transportation and connected facilities, and other open areas.
 8. Includes commercial dwelling units (motel or hotel rooms, bed and breakfast accommodations, short term rental units) or other commercial or corporate places where the principal purpose is to conduct legitimate business for profit, including building or warehouse surrounding areas.
 9. Includes junior kindergarten through to grade 13 schools or equivalent, whether during supervised or unsupervised activities, as well as university, college or business school campuses.
 10. Includes any commercial establishment in which the primary activity is drinking, eating and/or entertainment.
 11. Other location types include other non-commercial/corporate places, hospitals, correctional institutions, convenience stores, gas stations, religious institutions, banks or other financial institutions, construction sites, and homeless shelters/mission locations.
 12. Victim suffered a minor physical injury as a result of the sexual assault that did not require professional medical treatment or only some first-aid, as reported by police.
 13. Victim suffered a major physical injury as a result of the sexual assault that required professional medical attention or transportation to a medical facility, as reported by police.
 14. A weapon (e.g., knife, other piercing object, club or blunt instrument, firearm, or other type of weapon) was present during the commission of the sexual assault.
Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. Average quarterly figures for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average number of victims per quarter across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo. Reporting a crime to police can be done by any party, including the victim, a parent or guardian, or another third party. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Numbers may not add up to totals due to rounding, exclusion of unknowns for some categories, or inclusion of only selected characteristics. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown or over 89 years of age (<1%). Exercise caution when interpreting percent change figures when base figures are low.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

Table 4
Victims of police-reported sexual assault, by quarterly #MeToo period and victim sex and age group, Canada, 2016 and 2017

Victim characteristics	Pre-#MeToo (Jan. 2016 to Sept. 2017)		Post-#MeToo (Oct. 2017 to Dec. 2017)		Percent change in rate (pre- to post-#MeToo)	
	number	average rate	number	rate	percent	
Total males and females	37,924	15.0	6,766	18.6	24	
Children and youth (aged 0 to 17 years)	14,499	29.5	2,674	37.9	29	
Adults (aged 18 years and older)	23,425	11.5	4,092	13.9	21	
Total males	4,046	3.2	723	4.0	24	
Boys and youth (aged 0 to 17 years)	2,365	9.4	388	10.7	14	
0 to 11	1,375	8.1	195	8.0	-1	
12 to 17	990	11.9	193	16.2	36	
12 to 14	505	12.4	92	15.7	27	
15 to 17	485	11.4	101	16.6	46	
Adult men (aged 18 years and older)	1,681	1.7	335	2.3	39	
18 to 24	647	5.4	124	7.2	34	
25 to 34	427	2.4	71	2.8	15	
35 to 44	260	1.5	69	2.8	84	
45 to 54	196	1.1	50	2.0	80	
55 to 64	93	0.5	8	0.3	-40	
65 to 89	58	0.3	13	0.5	54	
Total females	33,878	26.6	6,043	33.1	24	
Girls and youth (aged 0 to 17 years)	12,134	50.7	2,286	66.5	31	
0 to 11	2,955	18.4	479	20.7	13	
12 to 17	9,179	116.4	1,807	160.2	38	
12 to 14	3,328	86.2	709	127.9	48	
15 to 17	5,851	145.3	1,098	191.5	32	
Adult women (aged 18 years and older)	21,744	21.1	3,757	25.3	20	
18 to 24	8,695	76.4	1,504	92.6	21	
25 to 34	6,278	35.3	1,077	42.1	19	
35 to 44	3,466	20.4	567	23.2	14	
45 to 54	1,932	10.9	348	13.8	27	
55 to 64	818	4.6	154	6.0	30	
65 to 89	555	2.6	107	3.4	33	

Note: Sexual assault offences include sexual assault level 1, level 2, and level 3. Counts are based on the number of victims where the most serious violation in the incident was sexual assault. Rates for the pre-#MeToo period represent the average rate across the seven quarters preceding #MeToo on the basis of 100,000 annual population figures, which means that rates will be lower than overall annual rates and thus are not comparable to annual sexual assault rates reported elsewhere. Populations are based upon July 1st annual estimates from Statistics Canada, Demography Division. Reporting a crime to police can be done by any party, including the victim, a parent or guardian, or another third party. The pre-#MeToo period is defined as sexual assaults reported to police and classified as founded between January 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. The post-#MeToo period includes those reported and founded between October 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown, or where the victim was over 89 years of age (<1%). Exercise caution when interpreting rates and percent change in rates when base figures for incidents are low.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.