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Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2006

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Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2006

Edited by Lucie Ogrodnik

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- . not available for any reference period
- .. not available for a specific reference period
- ... not applicable
- 0 true zero or a value rounded to zero
- 0^s value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- ^p preliminary
- ^r revised
- x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*
- E use with caution
- F too unreliable to be published

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Highlights

Chapter 1 – Spousal violence and prior police contact

- Results from a subset of linked UCR police records from 1995 to 2004 reveal that most spousal violence offenders (81%) were reported to police a single time during the 10-year timeframe. Repeat spousal offenders (those with 2 to 4 incidents of spousal violence reported to police) accounted for 18%, and chronic abusers (5 or more reported incidents) accounted for the remaining 1% of spousal offenders.
- Ex-spouses are more likely to have had repeated and chronic contacts with police for spousal abuse (43% ex-spouse versus 36% current spouse).
- According to results from the 10-year linked police file, two-thirds (64%) of spousal incidents reported to police show no escalation in the severity of the violence, another 21% show a de-escalation and 15% of subsequent incidents escalate in severity.
- Victims were just as likely to be injured from a single incident of spousal abuse (53%) as from repeated (51%) or chronic (52%) abuse.
- The likelihood that police will lay charges increases with repeated episodes of spousal violence coming to their attention. While charges were laid in 83% of one-time incidents coming to the attention of police, this increased to 87% of repeated incidents reported to police and 89% of chronic police contacts.
- According to the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS), only 28% of victims of spousal violence turned to police for help. Incidents that are reported tend to depend on the severity and frequency of the violence, and on whether children were witnesses. Other factors include whether the victim was female, young, Aboriginal or turned to others for support. Female victims of spousal violence were twice as likely as male victims to turn to the police for help (36% versus 17%).
- Among victims of spousal violence who reported to the police, the majority did so primarily to stop the violence from continuing and to receive protection. Other reasons for reporting to police included feeling that it was their duty to notify the authorities, or to have their abusive partner arrested and punished.
- Victims of spousal violence who had left an abusive relationship are more than twice as likely to have contacted the police compared to those who continue to live with their spouse or partner (38% versus 15%).
- Young females (aged 15 to 24) were most likely to report spousal violence to the police (50%), followed by those aged 25 to 34 (43%) and those 35 years of age and older (36%).
- Police are more likely to be contacted if the victim is Aboriginal. One half of female victims of spousal violence who self-identified as Aboriginal reported that the police were contacted compared to 35% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts.
- While women are more likely than men to experience more serious forms of spousal violence, victims who had suffered more serious forms of violence were equally likely to contact the police (54% women and 56% men).
- Injury, fearing for their life, having to take time off from their everyday activities and frequency of the violence are factors that impact on whether victims of spousal violence contact the police.

- Women victims of spousal violence who indicated that their children witnessed the violence were more likely to notify the police than those whose children did not witness the violence (51% versus 30%). Police reporting rates were lowest among women who had no children (25%).
- Female and male victims who contacted a community service were 2 to 3.5 times more likely to have notified the police. These results may be partially explained by the use of inter-agency referrals used in many communities.

Chapter 2 – Family violence against children and youth

- Data from a subset of 119 police services in 2004 indicate that children and youth under 18 years of age are at greatest risk of being physically or sexually assaulted by someone known to them.
- In 2004, 119 per 100,000 children and youth were physically or sexually assaulted by a parent, compared to 43 per 100,000 who were victimized by a sibling. Rates of assault by an extended family member stood at 28 per 100,000 population.
- Girls under the age of 18 experience higher rates of family violence than boys (242 versus 152 victims per 100,000 population in 2004). This difference is driven by the higher prevalence of sexual assault against girls and of spousal assault against older teenage girls.
- In 2004, boys aged 14 were at highest risk for physical assault by a family member (183 per 100,000 population) whereas for girls, 16 year olds reported the highest rate (290 per 100,000 population).
- About 4 in 10 child and youth victims of family violence sustained a physical injury in 2004. Among those against whom either a weapon or physical force had been used, half sustained no physical injury, 37% experienced a minor injury, 1% suffered major injuries and for 11% police were unable to discern whether an injury had been sustained.
- Rates of major injury were highest among infants and 1 year olds. Nineteen percent of infants less than 1 year of age sustained a major injury as a result of family violence, as did 8% of one year olds. Rates of major injury among all other ages ranged from nil to 2%.
- According to the 2003 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS), an estimated 235,315 child maltreatment investigations were conducted by child welfare services across Canada. Almost half of these investigations were substantiated, representing a rate of nearly 19 substantiated investigations per 1,000 children.
- Among substantiated child maltreatment cases, neglect was the most common form of child abuse (30%), followed by exposure to domestic violence (28%), physical abuse (24%), emotional maltreatment (15%) and sexual abuse (3%).
- The rate and type of child maltreatment was similar for boys and girls up to the age of 7, after which differences appear. The greatest proportion of boys abused were between 8 and 11 years of age, while for girls the highest proportion was between the ages of 12 and 15 years.
- Behavioral or emotional problems were among the most commonly noted functioning problems among maltreated children (27%), followed by depression or anxiety (17%) and learning disabilities (15%).

Chapter 3 – Family violence against older adults

- According to data from the 2004 GSS, seniors (aged 65 years and older) continue to be the least vulnerable to violent victimization. With a rate of 12 violent incidents per 1,000, seniors' risk was four times lower than those aged 55 to 64, and five times lower than those aged 45 to 54.
- Almost half of violent incidents against seniors (both family and non-family violence) go unreported to police. This compares to a non-reporting rate of 66% for violent crimes perpetrated against individuals under the age of 65.

- In 2004, based on police-reported data from a subset of police services in Canada, the rate of family violence among senior women was more than 20% higher than the rate for senior men. The gender difference at risk, however, was not as pronounced when compared to younger persons. Rates for women under 65 years were double to five times as high as the rates for men.
- In 2004, just over half (52%) of senior victims of family violence experienced no injuries. When injuries did occur, they tended to be minor in nature (33%).
- Nearly eight in ten people accused of family violence against a senior were men. While physical assaults were the most common type of offences committed by both male and female perpetrators, physical assaults were slightly more common among female perpetrators (76% versus 62%). On the other hand, uttering threats were more frequent offences among male accused than female accused (22% versus 12%).

Chapter 4 – Family homicides

- There has been an overall decline in the rate of spousal homicide for both male and female victims over the last 30 years (1974 to 2004). Rates were down 57% for female victims and down 68% for male victims of spousal homicide.
- Between 1974 and 2004, the rate of spousal homicide against females has been 3 to 5 times higher than the rate of male spousal homicide.
- Rates of spousal homicide are highest for young adults compared to older age groups, especially for female victims. Between 1995 and 2004, younger women (aged 15 to 24) were killed at a rate that is 3 times higher than the overall rate of female victims of spousal homicide. Whereas, young male spouses (aged 15 to 24) were killed at a rate more than 5 times that of all male spouses.
- Over the past decade (1995 to 2004), there was a 36% decrease in the use of firearms during the commission of spousal homicides.
- The likelihood that a homicide will result in the accused committing suicide is greater among spousal homicides (25%) than other family-related homicides (20%), or all homicides in general (4%).
- Of the 429 victims aged 0 to 17 years killed by a family member over the past decade (1995 to 2004), 90% were murdered by their own parent, similar to the proportion reported since 1974.
- Infants (less than 1 year of age) are at far greater risk of homicide by a family member compared to older children and youth. Between 1995 and 2004, more than one-quarter of all child and youth family-related homicides were infants (27%).
- Young parents tend to be disproportionately represented among those accused of killing their child. Despite representing only 2% of all parents, over the past decade, parents aged 15 to 24 years were responsible for 60% of all parental homicides against children less than one year of age, and 12% of homicides against those aged 1 to 17 years.
- Family members who kill young children (0 to 6 years of age) are most likely to use physical force (e.g. strangulation, beating or Shaken Baby Syndrome), whereas older children and youth (7 to 17 years of age) are most likely to be killed with a weapon (e.g. knife or a firearm).
- Compared to homicides in general, child and youth homicides perpetrated by family members are more likely to end in the suicide of the accused person. Between 1995 and 2004, more than one-quarter (28%) of all family-related child and youth homicides ended with the accused person (who was almost always the child's parent) killing themselves.
- Family-related homicides against older women are most commonly committed by the victim's spouse (39%) or adult son (34%). Older males killed by family members are most often murdered by their adult son (52%).

- Police suspected that almost half (49%) of all family members accused of killing an older adult (65+) since 1997 were suffering from a mental illness (e.g. dementia, schizophrenia, depression) at the time of the homicide.
- Approximately 1 in 5 (22%) family-related homicides against older adults (65+) over the past 10 years culminated in the suicide of the accused. Three-quarters of these family-related homicide-suicides involved older female victims, most of whom were killed by their spouse (58%).

Introduction

This is the ninth annual *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile* report produced by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics under the Federal Family Violence Initiative. This annual report provides the most current data on the nature and extent of family violence in Canada, as well as trends over time, as part of the ongoing initiative to inform policy makers and the public about family violence issues.

Each year the report has a different focus. This year, the focus is on examining the criminal history of persons charged with spousal violence over a 10-year timeframe (1995 to 2004). This is the first time the CCJS has examined spousal violence and repeat contact with the police, based on police-reported data from the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey. In addition, the report presents an analysis of family violence against children and youth, older adults (65+) and spouses. The report also includes results from the 2003 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

1.0 Spousal violence¹ and repeat police contact

by Lucie Ogrodnik

Introduction

Spousal violence is an unfortunate reality within a number of Canadian families. It is a unique situation in that the parties share (or shared) a relationship involving emotional and economic bonds and often times children, a complexity that does not exist when the violence is committed by acquaintances or strangers. In 2004, there were nearly 28,000 incidents of spousal violence reported to police², 84% involved female victims and 16% involved male victims (Table 1.1).

Current knowledge indicates that rather than a discreet incident, spousal violence frequently involves multiple violent incidents. This pattern of behaviour of repeated violence increases the potential for life-threatening harm. According to the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by Statistics Canada, 7% of females and 6% of males in current or previous spousal relationships reported having experienced some form of spousal violence during the previous 5 years. Of these, 57% of female victims and 49% of male victims experienced more than one incident of spousal abuse. Women were more likely than men to report being targets of 10 or more violent spousal episodes (Mihorean, 2005).

While significant progress has been made in the area of spousal violence, the extent to which these incidents escalate in frequency and seriousness is not well understood, nor is the impact of police intervention on patterns of spousal violence. A recent review of spousal abuse policies and legislation by the Ad Hoc Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group (2003) stated that little is known about the effect of charging policies on the reduction of spousal violence and recommended the development of tools to track individuals through the justice system. The working group also recommended the development of indicators on justice system performance to aid in decision-making and policy development.

For the first time, the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics examines patterns of police-reported offending among accused³ spousal violence offenders over the ten-year period from 1995 to 2004. The results of this linking project make an important contribution towards addressing these recommendations and improves our understanding concerning patterns of spousal violence and the response of the criminal justice system.

In order to address these issues, the following research questions are examined:

- Are there discernable differences in the nature and severity of spousal violence between one-time, repeat and chronic offenders?
- Is there a progression in the level of violence among repeat and chronic offenders as evidenced by an escalation in the seriousness of offences, the use of weapons or injury to the victim?
- Are patterns of spousal violence different for male versus female offenders?
- How does police intervention impact patterns of spousal violence?

Understanding the context in which spousal violence occurs and re-occurs will support jurisdictional efforts in evaluating current policies and practices, and will help policy makers at the federal and provincial/territorial levels, and criminal justice practitioners including police, courts, victim and health service personnel to plan and develop prevention and intervention strategies to address spousal violence.

1.1 A 10-year spousal violence data file: 1995 to 2004

For the purposes of this analysis, a composite data file was created linking all spousal violence incidents⁴ reported to selected police services from 1995 to 2004 with data on the characteristics of the perpetrators and their victims. A unique code was used to identify individual spousal violence offenders in the subset to enable the tracking of perpetrators and their repeated contacts with the police over the 10 years under study. A total of 211,791 violent spousal incidents, committed by 172,141 perpetrators were reported to police during this 10-year timeframe.

1. Spousal violence refers to violence committed by legally married, common law, separated and divorced partners.
2. Data are based on a subset of 119 police departments in 8 provinces across Canada, representing 53% of the national volume of reported crime.
3. Throughout this chapter 'accused' is used to describe spousal violence offenders who were reported to the police and who may have been charged, but may not have been convicted in a court of law.
4. One criminal incident can include more than one offence. For incidents involving multiple offences, only the most serious is counted.

The 10-year linked data file was derived from the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) survey which, due to its phased implementation, is not nationally representative. The linked file includes police-reported data from a subset of 64 police services that consistently reported to the UCR2 survey during the 10-year timeframe. Combined, these police services represent 44% of the national volume of crime. Police services included in this subset are primarily the major urban police services in New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia and most police services in Quebec. The major police services that were excluded are the RCMP (currently converting to the UCR2 survey) and the Ontario Provincial Police (joined the UCR2 survey in 2001). Data from the 10-year linked file are therefore not geographically representative either at the national or provincial levels. Nevertheless, the linked data file includes a large enough proportion of all police-reported crimes in Canada that parameters of spousal violence offending and repeat contact with the police would unlikely be biased in comparison with the national picture.

The reader should keep in mind that not all incidents of spousal abuse are reported to police. Disclosing spousal violence is difficult for many victims. The 2004 GSS victimization survey found that only 28% of victims of spousal violence reported the incident to police (36% female victims versus 17% male victims). Furthermore, the GSS also found that 61% of victims of spousal violence experienced more than one violent incident prior to contacting the police (Mihorean, 2005). This analysis is therefore limited to an examination of those persons coming to the attention of police for incidents of spousal violence within the 10-year timeframe of the study, 1995 through 2004. For a fuller discussion about police reporting practices among victims of spousal violence see Section 1.3 of this report.

Spousal violence categories

In order to compare characteristics of single incidents of spousal violence with repeated and chronic spousal abuse, offenders coming to the attention of police were subdivided into the following three categories:

One-time police contact: Individuals that had a single incident of spousal violence brought to the attention of police during the study period.

Repeat contact with police: Individuals that had 2 to 4 incidents of spousal violence brought to the attention of police during the study period.

Chronic contact with police: Individuals that had 5 or more incidents of spousal violence brought to the attention of police during the study period.

The reader is cautioned regarding the composition of these spousal violence categories in that they may not be exclusive. For example, a spousal offender coded as

having a single police contact may in fact have committed repeated acts of spousal abuse either prior to or following the reference period, but only came to the attention of police a single time during the 10-year timeframe under analysis. This precaution can also be applied to the 'repeat' spousal violence category. Theoretically, spousal offenders coded as having 'repeat contact with the police' may have committed additional acts of spousal violence which were not reported to, or did not come to the attention of police during the timeframe. As previously indicated, the 2004 GSS survey found that fully 61% of victims experienced more than one violent incident prior to contacting the police, and just under one-half of these victims experienced more than 10 incidents of violence before the police were informed (Mihorean, 2005).

Spousal violence and repeat contact with police

The following section explores whether there are discernable differences between the three categories of spousal violence offenders: one-time, repeat (2 to 4) and chronic offenders (5 or more) in the nature and severity of spousal violence, in the police response, and the impact police intervention may have on subsequent episodes of spousal violence.

Frequency of spousal abuse

Typically, spousal abuse is reported to occur in cycles where abusive episodes are interspersed with calmer 'honeymoon periods' (Gordon, 2000; Rand and Saltzman, 2003). According to data from the police-reported linked file, the number of contacts with police for spousal violence offenders ranged from 1 to 27 during the 10 years under study. Overall, spousal abusers had an average of 1.8⁵ contacts with police related to spousal violence, with male abusers averaging 1.9 and females averaging 1.3 contacts with police during the 10-year timeframe. When single incidents of spousal violence are removed, repeat and chronic spousal abusers, taken together, averaged 3 police contacts over 10 years. Chronic abusers alone averaged 7 contacts over the 10-year timeframe.

Results from the police-reported 10-year linked file reveal that most spousal violence *offenders* (81%) were reported to police only a single time during the 10-year timeframe. Repeat spousal offenders (those individuals that had 2 to 4 incidents of spousal violence reported to police) accounted for 18%, and chronic abusers (5 or more incidents of spousal violence reported to police) accounted for the remaining 1% of spousal offenders. Although repeat and chronic offenders together represented 19% of spousal violence offenders, they were responsible for 38% of all spousal violence *incidents* reported to police (repeat 33% and chronic 5%).

5. Based on the entire sample of spousal offenders including one-time, repeat and chronic offenders.

The large proportion of 'one-time' spousal offenders may be explained by the fact that additional incidents of abuse that may have occurred within the 10-year timeframe were not reported to or detected by police. Alternatively, victims may have decided to report incidents to police only when the violence escalated to a serious enough level that necessitated police intervention. In addition, reporting to police may have had a deterrent effect on subsequent spousal violence.

Spousal violence defined

Police-reported spousal violence refers to all violent incidents committed by legally married, separated and divorced partners. This includes same-sex partners and ex-partners. Ex-spouse includes separated and divorced partners.

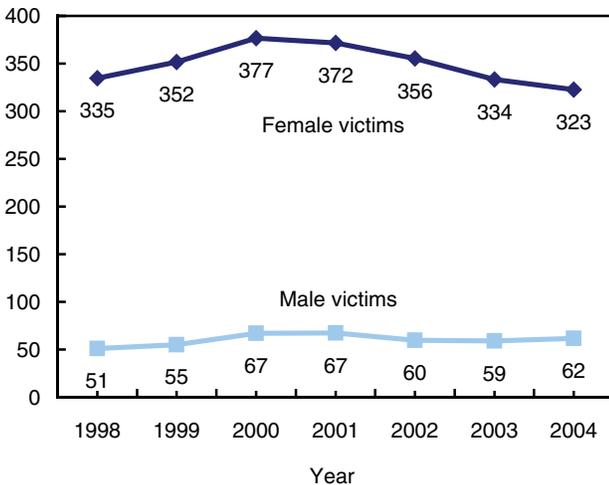
Criminal Code offences for spousal violence

Although the *Criminal Code of Canada* does not have a specific 'spousal violence offence', an abuser can be charged with a number of criminal charges ranging from attempted murder, murder, manslaughter, assault, sexual assault, criminal harassment and uttering threats. Violation of a protective court order, such as a peace bond or a prohibition order may also result in charges.

For the current analysis, all violent offences perpetrated against one's spouse/ex spouse that were reported to police are analyzed.

Figure 1.1
Recent declines in rates of police-reported spousal violence, 1998 to 2004

Rate per 100,000 females and males



Notes: Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown. Includes victims aged 15 to 89 years of age. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 68 police department, representing 37% of the national volume of crime in 2004. Rate per 100,000 population aged 15 years and older, by sex for the geographic areas policed by the subset of police respondents.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Trend Database.

Recent declines in rates of police-reported spousal assault

To examine trends in spousal violence over time, it is necessary to use the UCR2 Trend database which contains police-reported data from a subset of 68 police services across Canada who reported consistently to the survey from 1998 to 2004, representing 37% of the national volume of crime.

While rates¹ of police-reported spousal violence steadily increased for both females and males from 1998 through 2000, the rates have since shown steady decreases (Figure 1.1). This recent downward trend is also reflected in the decrease in overall violent crime rates in Canada. The violent crime rate dropped 10% over the past decade, after having increased for most of the 1960s, '70s and '80s (Sauvé, 2005). Similarly, the Homicide survey reports that the rate of lethal spousal violence declined for the third consecutive year in 2004 (Dauvergne, 2005). Although it is difficult to accurately determine the causes of this decline in rates of spousal violence, increased awareness, increases in social services such as shelters, and better responses by police and the courts have likely played a role.

Recent declines in rates more pronounced for females

While the rates of police-reported spousal violence mirrored the decrease in the overall violent crime rates, the decrease in spousal violence was more pronounced for female victims. Female victim rates dropped 14% from the peak of 377 per 100,000 females in 2000, to a rate of 323 in 2004. Male rates show a smaller decrease of 8% from the peak of 67 per 100,000 male victims in 2000 to 62 per 100,000 in 2004 (Figure 1.1).

While annual police-reported rates for spousal abuse continue to be over five times higher for females than for males, the difference between the sexes seems to be narrowing. Over the six-year period from 1998 to 2004, the ratio of female to male victims of spousal violence dropped from nearly 7:1 to 5:1.

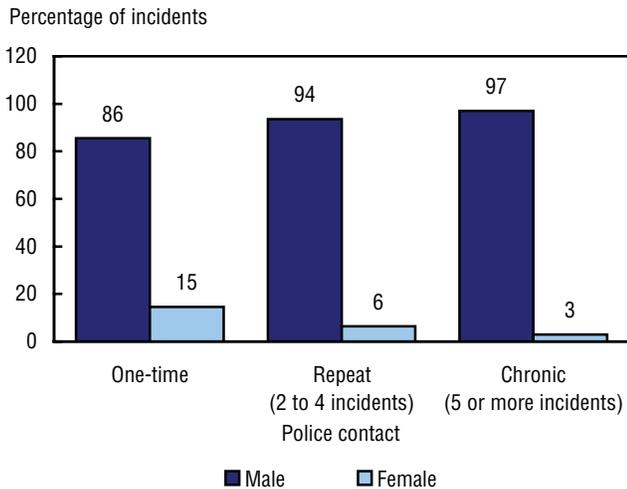
1. Rates are calculated per 100,000 population aged 15 years and older by sex for the geographic areas policed by the subset of UCR2 police respondents. Populations by marital status are not available for this subset of police respondents.

Most spousal violence incidents committed by males

Males were much more likely than females to be the perpetrators of spousal violence incidents coming the attention of police. Gender differences are also evident across the three categories of spousal offenders with male perpetrators being more likely to repeatedly abuse their spouse than female perpetrators (Figure 1.2). The proportion of spousal violence incidents committed by males increases with repeated abuse (one-time 86%, repeat 94%, chronic 97%).

These results are consistent with the 2004 GSS victimization data that reveal that women are more likely than men to experience repeated violence, and that women are much more likely to report that they were the targets of more than 10 violent incidents at the hand of violent partners (Mihorean, 2005).

Figure 1.2
Males perpetrate most spousal abuse, 1995 to 2004



Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Excludes incidents where the sex of the victim was unknown. Includes victims aged 15 to 98. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 64 police departments representing 44% of the national volume of crime.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 10-year file.

Average age of spousal abuser reported to police is 34

Research indicates that young couples are at increased risk of spousal violence (Brzozowski, 2004). According to results from the 1999 and 2004 GSS victimization survey, respondents who had partners in the 15 to 24 year age group and in the 25 to 34 year age group reported the highest rates⁶ of spousal violence.

The 2004 GSS results also suggest that victims of spousal violence tend to experience multiple episodes of violence prior to contacting the police. Given this tendency to delay contacting the police until victims have endured multiple episodes of spousal violence, it is not surprising that according to the police-reported 10-year linked file, the mean age of spousal violence offenders at first offence reported to police is 34 years of age (34 for males and 33 for females).

Repeat and chronic spousal abusers tend to be younger when first reported to police than those who had a single contact with police during the 10-year timeframe. Single incident abusers have a mean age of 36 years compared to 34 for repeat (2 to 4 incidents), and 32 for chronic (5 or more incidents) spousal abusers. Whether the spousal

perpetrator is a one-time, repeat or chronic offender, male spousal abusers tend to be older than females.

Assault most common type of spousal violence

Spousal violence involves a variety of abusive behaviours that result in physical, emotional and psychological consequences for victims. This study, as well as other research reveals a broad spectrum of abusive behaviour ranging from relatively minor one-time assaults, to situations where a pattern of serious and repeated spousal abuse is evident.

According to the police-reported 10-year linked file, the most common type of spousal violence is common assault (level 1) (65%), which includes behaviours such as pushing, slapping and punching where no weapon was used and no serious injury was involved (Table 1.2). This figure is somewhat lower in comparison to the overall violent crime rates which show that common assault is the most frequently recorded by police, accounting for 4 out of every 5 assault incidents (Sauvé, 2005). The next most frequently reported offences committed against spouses are assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2) (13%), followed by uttering threats (10%) and criminal harassment (7%). These four offences account for 95% of all violent offences committed against spouses during this 10-year timeframe.

Differences between the sexes are evident when exploring the types of spousal violence reported. While female victims of spousal violence are more likely to report being victims of common assault (level 1) (66% of females versus 59% of males), male victims are nearly twice as likely to report more serious assaults (levels 2 and 3) (23% of males versus 13% of females). However, these figures represent a total of 145,600 women and 21,529 men who reported to police that they were physically assaulted by their spouse or ex-spouse within the 10-year period⁷. There are two possible explanations for this gender difference. First, police-reported data show that in cases of spousal violence, men are more likely than women to use physical force, while women are more likely to rely on weapons (Brzozowski, 2004). When a weapon is used during an act of violence it automatically increases the severity of the offence; therefore, a greater proportion of offenders who use a weapon are charged with more serious assaults. Another possible explanation may be that male victims of spousal abuse may be less likely

6. Throughout this report, the reader is cautioned against making comparisons between rates based on victimization data, police-reported data and homicide data. While victimization and homicide rates are calculated based on all adults in the Canadian population, rates for police-reported data only take into account the populations for the geographic areas policed by the subset of UCR2 police respondents. In addition, populations by marital status are not available for the UCR2 subset of police respondents.

7. The count includes the total number of individual victims coming to the attention of police during the 10-year timeframe. An individual victim may have reported more than once to the police, thus will be counted more than once.

to report minor incidents to police, or are too embarrassed to involve the police until the violence escalates into more serious offences.

An equal proportion of females and males reported to police that their spouse uttered threats against them (10% each) within the 10-year timeframe; however, this represents just over 18,000 female and 2,550 male victims. Similarly, the proportion of female and male victims who reported to police that they were criminally harassed by their spouse/ex-spouse was not that different (7% versus 6%); however, these figures represent over 13,300 female and 1,480 male victims.

Ex-spouses more likely to repeatedly abuse

Although it is a common assumption that separation and divorce should end the risk of spousal violence, some research suggests that it often begins, continues or even escalates after marital separation (Hotton, 2001; Johnson, 1996). This observation is corroborated with the findings of the 10-year linked data.

Current spouses are more likely to have a single contact with police for spousal abuse (64% versus 57%), while ex-spouses are more likely to have had repeated and chronic contacts with police (43% ex-spouse versus 36% current spouse) (Figure 1.3)⁸. This pattern is particularly true for male ex-spouses who play a larger role in repeated and chronic contacts with police for spousal violence (45% ex-spouse and 38% current) compared to female abusers (23% ex-spouse and 19% current).

Common assault (74%) is the most frequently reported offence against current spouses, followed by major assaults (17%), while uttering threats (5%) and criminal harassment (1%) are less prevalent. It is interesting to note that for ex-spouses, after common assault (47%), criminal harassment (19%) and uttering threats (20%) were the most frequently reported offences, with major assault being less prevalent (8%).

Elapsed time between reported incidents of spousal abuse

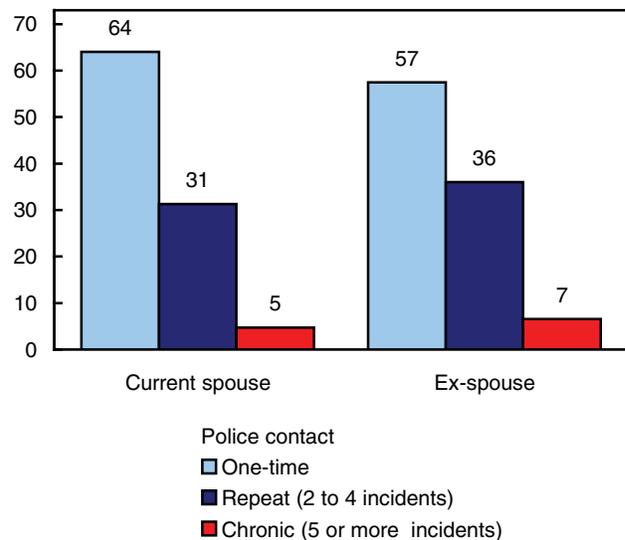
Another aspect of spousal violence that requires examination is the elapsed time between episodes of abuse. Looking retrospectively at past contacts with police within the 10-year timeframe, the number of days that elapsed between officially reporting incidents to the police was calculated⁹.

A mean of 18 months elapsed between subsequent reporting of incidents of spousal violence to police. The elapsed time was shortest for those who had chronic contact with police with a mean of 11 months.

On average, repeated spousal abuse at the hand of an ex-spouse is reported to police sooner than repeated abuse at the hand of a current spouse (16 months compared to

Figure 1.3
Ex-spouses more likely to repeatedly abuse, 1995 to 2004

Percentage of incidents



Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Excludes incidents where the sex of the victim was unknown. Includes victims aged 15 to 98. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 64 police departments representing 44% of the national volume of crime.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 10-year file.

19 months). Nearly 40% of spousal abuse perpetrated by an ex-spouse was reported to police within 6 months of a previously reported incident, compared to 26% by a current spouse.

When more serious types of spousal abuse are involved, even less time elapses between incidents reported to police. Repeat incidents involving the least serious forms of spousal violence (i.e., common assault, uttering threats) tend to be reported on average 18.5 months apart, while incidents involving more serious types of violence (i.e. aggravated assault, kidnapping, aggravated sexual assault) are reported sooner, an average of 15 months apart.

Severity of spousal abuse

The severity of spousal violence can be measured in a number of ways. The following sections examine the types of assaults perpetrated by spouses (assault levels 1, 2 and 3), the use of weapons, the level of injury sustained by victims, and whether or not there was a progression in the seriousness of spousal violence with subsequent episodes of abuse reported to police. The literature points to the assumption that crimes tend to escalate in seriousness as

8. Populations by marital status are not available for the police respondents included in the 10-year linked file; therefore, rates could not be calculated.

9. One-time spousal offenders were removed from this subset.

the crime is repeated (Kyvsgaard, 2003). If we are to apply this theory to spousal abuse, we would expect to see a progression from less serious forms of spousal abuse to very serious forms, sometimes culminating in lethal spousal violence.

The three levels of assault (level 1, 2, 3) can be used as indicators of increasing severity of spousal violence. When looking at differences in the severity of police-reported assaults committed by offenders with one-time, repeat and chronic police contacts, the data indicate only a small escalation in seriousness with repeated spousal abuse. The proportion of incidents involving major assault (levels 2 and 3) is only slightly higher for individuals that had chronic police contact (16%) compared to repeat (14%) and one-time (14%) police contact for spousal abuse (Figure 1.4).

Changes in seriousness between an offenders' first and last offence within the 10-year timeframe was also examined¹⁰ (Refer to the methodology section for more detail). Data from the 10-year linked file reveal that overall, spousal abuse that is reported to the police tends not to escalate to more serious forms of violence. Two-thirds (64%) of spousal incidents reported to police show a pattern where the severity of the violence towards their spouse does not increase over time; that is, the level of seriousness of subsequent abuse is in most cases unchanged. Another 21% of spousal violence incidents show a de-escalation where episodes of police-reported spousal violence are less serious than those previously reported. The remaining 15% of subsequent incidents of spousal violence show an escalation in severity.

An escalation in subsequent violent attacks is somewhat more likely to occur when committed by female abusers than by males (20% versus 15%). Once again, this may be attributed to the propensity of females to rely on weapons to inflict harm, while males rely on physical force. The data does not show any differences between current and ex-spouses in terms of escalation (15% versus 16%).

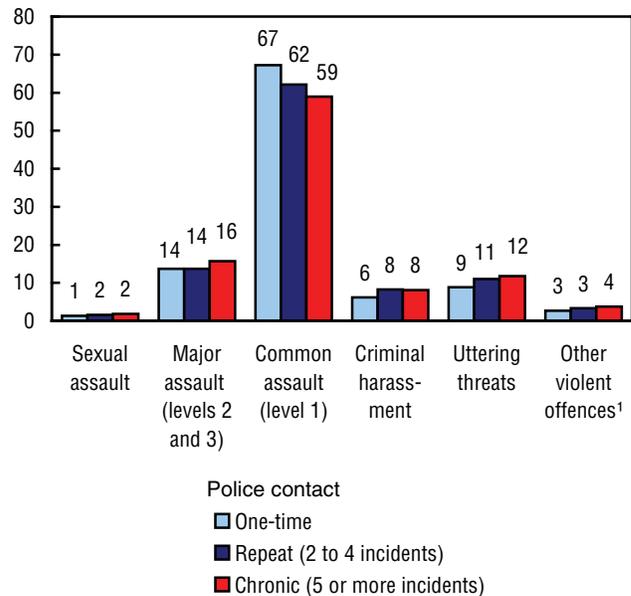
These results may be an indication that while repeated incidents of spousal abuse are likely occurring, victims may delay contacting the police until the abuse escalates to a serious enough level to warrant police intervention; therefore, incidents coming to the attention of police may already be at an elevated level. This overall trend is similar to that found by a Danish longitudinal study that examined patterns and progression of criminal behavior using a linked file of police, court and corrections data (Kyvsgaard, 2003).

Weapon use uncommon in spousal violence reported to police

Similar to violent crimes in general, spousal abuse typically does not involve a weapon. Weapons were not used in over eighty percent (83%) of spousal incidents, of which

Figure 1.4
Most offences against spouses are common assault, 1995 to 2004

Percentage of incidents



1. Includes unlawfully causing bodily harm, criminal negligence causing bodily harm, other assaults, kidnapping, extortion, hostage-taking, explosives causing death/bodily harm, arson and other violent violations.
Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Excludes incidents where the sex of the victim was unknown. Includes victims aged 15 to 98. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 64 police departments representing 44% of the national volume of crime.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 10-year file.

50% involved the use of physical force. Weapons were used in nearly 12% of incidents between spouses, and for the remaining 5% of incidents a weapon was used but the type was unknown (Table 1.3).

Female perpetrators that come to the attention of police are twice as likely to use a weapon against their spouse as male abusers (21% versus 10%). Knives or other weapons (e.g. explosives, fire, motor vehicle, poison) were most commonly used by female abusers. On the other hand, male perpetrators are more likely to use physical force (52% versus 40%). The findings also indicate that female accused are twice as likely as males to use a weapon when they had repeat (20% female versus 10% male) or chronic (15% female versus 7% male) contacts with police for spousal violence. The higher proportion of females using a weapon may be related to differences in physical strength between men and women, resulting in a greater tendency for women to rely on weapons to inflict harm (Busch and Rosenberg, 2004).

10. One-time offenders were excluded from this analysis.

The question then arises as to whether or not a weapon is more likely to be used by those who are repeatedly abusive. When looking across the three types of spousal abusers, the data reveal that weapon use tends to decrease from 13% of incidents committed by abusers who had a single police contact, compared to 10% of those who had repeat police contacts, and 8% of persons who had chronic contacts with police. This may be because the one-time assaults that involve a weapon are more likely to be reported to police, to be charged and to result in a conviction that may include incarceration; therefore, these persons may not have had the opportunity to re-offend.

Most injuries sustained are minor

Four in ten (41%) victims of spousal violence reported suffering no physical injury, regardless of whether the victim was female or male. For the 52% of victims of spousal violence that did sustain physical injuries, 95% suffered minor injuries¹¹, 4% suffered major injuries¹², and less than 1% of the injuries resulted in death. The extent of injuries was unknown for the remaining 6% of victims. These patterns are similar for both male and female victims of spousal violence.

These results seem contrary to those reported by the 2004 GSS victimization survey which state that women experience more serious and injurious spousal violence than men. The discrepancy between the results from these two data sources may be partially explained by the fact that men are less likely to self-report violence perpetrated against them to police than are women; in addition, male victims tend only to report when the injury is of a more serious nature (Mihorean, 2005).

The police-reported linked file reveals that the risk of physical injury to victims of spousal violence does not seem to increase with repeated abuse. Victims were just as likely to be injured from a single incident of spousal abuse (53%) as from repeated (51%) or chronic (52%) abuse. Given that multiple incidents of spousal violence are likely to occur prior to the victim contacting the police, these results suggest that the violence meets a certain level of severity before the police are contacted regardless of the number of prior incidents.

1.2 Police response to spousal violence, 1995 to 2004

As one of several initiatives to improve justice responses to family violence, the 1980s saw the implementation of mandatory charging policies across the country. The intention of these policies was to eliminate police discretion and inconsistency when responding to reports of domestic violence by removing the onus from the victim, and requiring police to lay charges where there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that an offence had been committed. In making the justice system more responsive to victims of spousal violence, it was anticipated that more

victims would report the violence to the police. Despite the implementation of such policies, according to the GSS, reporting spousal abuse to police has remained stable: 28% of spousal violence victims reported to police in 2004 compared to 27% in 1999.

Most spousal violence incidents are 'cleared by charge'

Victims of spousal violence call the police for their personal safety and protection from their abusive partner. According to the police-recorded 10-year linked file, charges were laid or recommended in 84% of spousal violence incidents and the remaining 16% were 'cleared otherwise' (Refer to textbox). Police clearance rates for spousal violence are considerably higher compared to the clearance rates for violent crimes in general (47% cleared by charge) (Gannon et. al, 2005). Despite mandatory charging practices, 10% of victims of spousal abuse requested that police not press charges against their spouse or ex-spouse. In these instances, victims merely wanted the police to intervene and stop the abuse without taking further criminal action against their abusive partner.

Incident clearance status defined

Police describe the status of a cleared criminal incident either as 'cleared by charge' or 'cleared otherwise'. 'Cleared by charge' indicates that at least one suspect has been identified and that there is a charge laid against, or recommended to be laid against an individual in connection with an incident.

Alternatively, police code the incident as being 'cleared otherwise' indicating that at least one suspect has been identified and there is sufficient evidence to lay a charge, but for one of the following reasons, the suspect is processed by other means including: the complainant declined to lay charges, departmental discretion, suicide of accused, death of accused, death of witness/complainant, accused involved in other incidents, committal of accused to mental hospital, accused in foreign country, diversionary program or beyond department control.

Police charging increases with repeated abuse

The likelihood that police will lay charges in cases of spousal abuse increases with repeated episodes of spousal violence coming to their attention. While charges were laid in 83% of one-time spousal violence incidents, this increased to 87% for repeat contacts and 89% for chronic police contacts (Figure 1.5).

11. Physical injuries that require no professional medical treatment or only some first-aid.

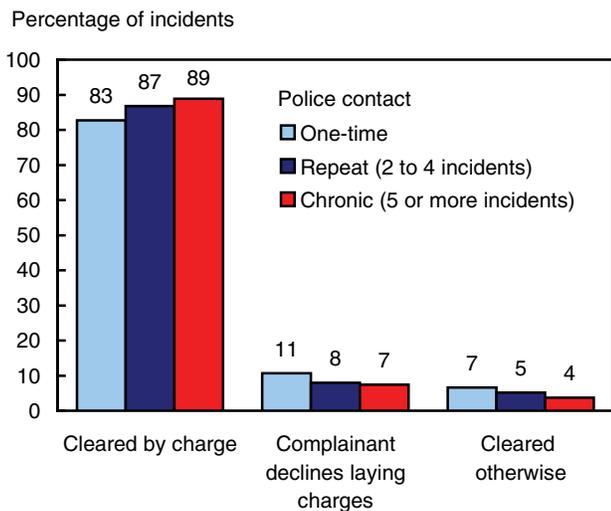
12. Physical injuries that require professional medical attention at the scene or transportation to a medical facility.

The likelihood that repeat and chronic offenders are dealt with by the police in a manner other than laying charges diminishes with multiple police contacts. Victims of repeat (8%) and chronic (7%) spousal incidents were less likely to request that charges be dropped than were victims of a one-time spousal incident (11%).

Results from the 10-year linked file also show that police are more likely to lay charges in incidents of spousal violence when the abuser is male rather than female (86% versus 70%). Incidents committed by female abusers were more than twice as likely to be cleared otherwise (12% females versus 5% males). This is also supported by the 2004 GSS victimization data which found that police made an arrest or laid a charge in a larger proportion of wife assault cases than cases of husband assault (Mihorean, 2005).

Males coming to the attention of police repeated times (2 to 4 incidents) for spousal violence are more likely to be charged than are females (88% versus 75%). Similarly, males inflicting chronic spousal abuse also had a higher likelihood of being charged compared to females (89% versus 81%). Interestingly, this pattern suggests that any gender gap that may have existed in terms of police charging practices narrows considerably once chronic incidents of spousal violence are evident.

Figure 1.5
Charges are laid in most spousal violence incidents, 1995 to 2004



Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Excludes incidents where the sex of the victim was unknown. Includes victims aged 15 to 98. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 64 police departments representing 44% of the national volume of crime.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 10-year file.

When spousal violence is committed by a female, the victim is twice as likely to request that police not lay charges compared to when the abuse is committed by a male (18% versus 9%). This holds true even when the female abuser has had repeated (14% versus 8%) or chronic (15% versus 7%) contacts with police.

Impact of police contact on subsequent spousal violence

The 2004 GSS survey asked respondents about the impact that police contact had on subsequent episodes of spousal violence. Nearly sixty percent (57%) of all victims indicated that the violence decreased after police intervention, 11% indicated that the violence had increased and another 30% of victims reported no change in the level of subsequent abuse after police contact. Female victims were more likely than male victims to experience an increase in subsequent episodes of spousal violence after police intervention (12%)¹³.

Similarly, results from the police-reported 10-year linked file show that police intervention did seem to have some impact on the severity of subsequent spousal abuse, yet not as large an impact as that demonstrated by the GSS. For 21% of spousal violence incidents that were charged by police, subsequent episodes of abuse decreased in severity. However, for nearly two-thirds (63%) of incidents there was no change in the severity of subsequent abuse, even when police had previously laid charges. And for another 15% of incidents the violence escalated despite police intervention and the laying of charges.

One possible explanation for the difference between police-reported and victimization data in terms of the impact of police intervention on subsequent spousal abuse may be in how severity is measured by these two sources. That is, while police base severity on the type of offence reported (i.e. assault level 1, 2 or 3), the victimization survey uses a wider range of violent acts (ranging from being threatened, to being pushed or slapped, to being beaten or choked at knife point), which allows for a finer distinction to be made when measuring severity.

13. The reporting rates for male victims were too small to allow reliable estimates.

Spousal abuse among same-sex partners

There is a growing body of research indicating that spousal abuse occurs among both lesbian and gay couples (Health Canada 1998, Leventhal & Lundy, 1999). However, same-sex couples may have fewer avenues to seek help when abused compared to heterosexual couples due to a number of potential obstacles including negative attitudes towards homosexuality, fear of disclosing one's sexual orientation, lack of family support, lack of sensitivity and awareness among helping professionals and a lack of shelters that are sensitive to the reality of abuse in same-sex relationships (Kirkland, 2004).

The 2004 GSS victimization survey found that while the overall proportion of those who experienced spousal violence and who indicated that they were gay or lesbian was low, the rate of spousal violence between same-sex couples was twice the rate of violence between heterosexual couples (15% versus 7%) (Mihorean, 2005).

Violence between male same-sex couples

According to the 10-year linked file, 2.5% of police-reported incidents of spousal violence occurred between same-sex couples. The proportion of these incidents in which the couples were gay males is two-and-a-half times that of lesbian couples (72% versus 28%). These data may undercount the prevalence of violence between same-sex couples as police may code the relationship as something other than current or ex-spouse (e.g. boyfriend or girlfriend).

Seventy percent (70%) of spousal violence incidents between same-sex couples that were reported to police were single incidents, compared to 62% among

heterosexual couples. Heterosexual couples are at slightly increased risk of repeated spousal abuse (33% versus 27%) and chronic abuse (5% versus 4%) compared to same-sex couples.

Common assault is slightly more likely to occur between heterosexual spouses than same-sex couples (65% versus 61%). There is virtually no difference in the proportion of serious assaults (14% and 15%), uttering threats (12% versus 10%) or criminal harassment (7% each) between these two subgroups.

While the largest proportion of reported violence between both heterosexual (67%) and same-sex couples (61%) is perpetrated by a current partner, the proportion perpetrated by an ex-partner is somewhat greater among same-sex couples (39%) than heterosexual couples (33%).

The data indicate that same-sex couples report a slightly smaller proportion of spousal abuse incidents involving injuries than did heterosexual couples (49% versus 53%). Injuries due to physical force are slightly less likely for same-sex couples compared to heterosexual couples (47% versus 51%). Weapon use, although not common in situations of spousal violence, is equally likely to occur among same-sex and heterosexual couples (13% versus 12%).

Police are less likely to lay charges in incidents of spousal violence between same-sex couples than they are for heterosexual spouses (78% versus 85%). Victims of same-sex spousal abuse are slightly more likely to request that police not press charges against their partner as compared to heterosexual couples (13% versus 10%).

1.3 Factors related to reporting spousal violence to police

by Karen Mihorean

Over the past two decades efforts have been made to create a justice system that is more responsive to spousal violence victims so that more victims would come forward and report their abuse to the police. Despite these efforts, results from the GSS show that there has been no change in the level of reporting by victims of spousal violence to the police from 1999 and 2004. According to the 1999 cycle of the GSS, 27% of respondents who self-reported being victims of spousal violence reported turning to the police for help compared to 28% in 2004 (Figure 1.6).

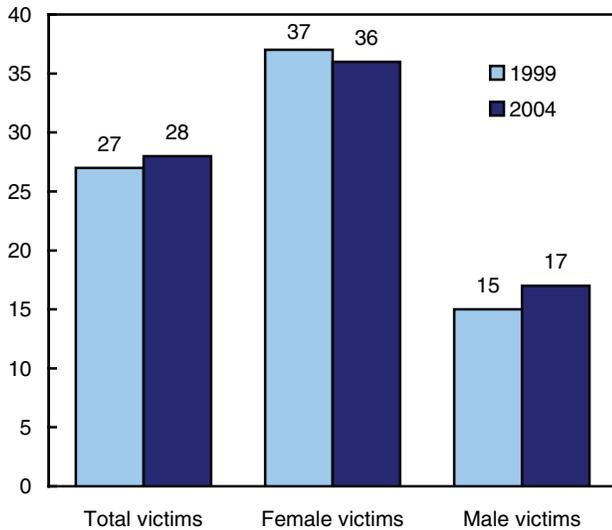
Among victims of spousal violence, women were more likely than men to turn to the police for help (36% versus 17%). This difference in reporting rates between women and men victims is reflected in official police statistics. According to the 2004 Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, about 84% of spousal violence victims are women, while the remaining 16% are male victims.

Questions arise as to what are the differences between those who report spousal violence and those who decided not to contact the police. Why is it that a greater proportion of female than male victims report spousal violence to the police? Is it that the violence is more serious or are there other factors at play?

This section aims to respond to these questions by examining the differences between those who contact the police for help and those who do not. While the GSS directly asked respondents why they reported to the police and why they may have chosen not to report to the police, other differences between these two groups can be examined to highlight the differences between them. The following analysis examines differences in the severity of the violence, how often the violence occurred, length of the relationship between the victim and their partner, whether the couple was married or living common-law, whether children witnessed the spousal violence, who else victims turned to for support, and community ties.

Figure 1.6
Rates of reporting spousal violence to police unchanged, 1999 and 2004

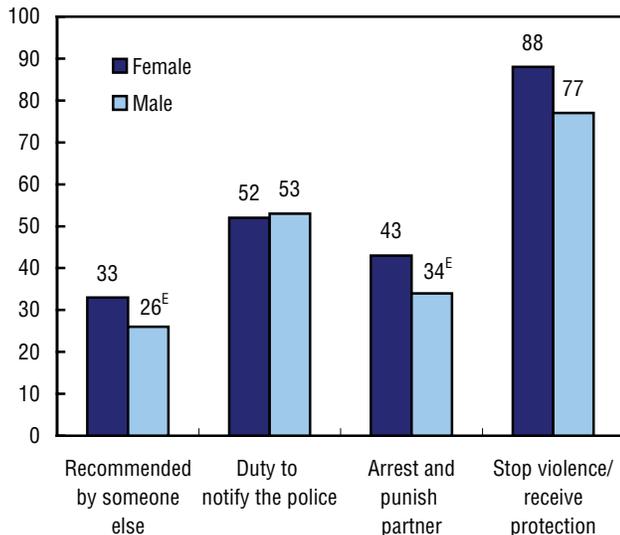
Percentage of women and men abused



Note: Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5-year period.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1999 and 2004.

Figure 1.7
Motivations for reporting to the police, 2004

Percentage of those who self-reported to the police



^E use with caution (coefficient of variation is high 16.6% to 33.3%)
Notes: Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple responses. Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5-year period and brought it to the attention of police.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

What victims tell us about reporting to the police

Overall, both female and male victims of spousal violence disclosed similar reasons for reporting and not reporting to the police. Of those who reported to the police, the majority did so in an effort to stop the violence from continuing and to receive protection (88% of female victims and 77% of male victims), followed by feeling that it is their duty to notify the police (52% of female victims and 53% of male victims), and to have their abusive partner arrested and punished (43% of women and 34% of men)¹⁴ (Figure 1.7).

The main reasons given by victims of spousal abuse for not reporting to police was that they did not want anyone to find out about the violence (36%), they wanted to deal with the violence in another way (21%) and that it was a personal matter that did not concern officials (14%). While reasons for not reporting to police were similar between the sexes, male victims were more likely than their female counterparts to say that they didn't report because they did not want anyone to find out about the violence (44% versus 27%), and a significant proportion of female and male victims said they wanted to deal with the violence in another way (24% and 18% respectively).

Those who had left an abusive partner more likely to have contacted police

Whether a person stays with or leaves an abusive relationship influences whether or not that person contacted the authorities. According to the 2004 GSS, those who had left an abusive relationship are more than twice as likely to have contacted the police as those who continue to live with their spouse or partner (38% versus 15%).

This seems to be particularly true for men in abusive relationships where rates of reporting to the police were three times higher for those who had left the relationship (27%) than for those couples who remained together (9%). For women who had left a previous abusive relationship, rates were twice as high as for those who indicated violence by a current spouse/partner (45% versus 22%). Regardless of the status of the relationship, women were more likely than men to report spousal violence to the police.

Women who experienced violence in the past 12 months more likely than men to turn to police

Overall, victims who experienced spousal violence in the past 12 month period had similar patterns of police reporting as those who experienced violence prior to that 12 month period. According to the 2004 GSS, 31% of those who indicated experiencing violence within the past 12 months reported the violence to the police, and 28% who experienced spousal violence within a 5-year span, but not in the past year, contacted the authorities.

14. Percentages do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

The highest reporting rates were found among women who experienced violence in the past 12 months. In fact, women who experienced spousal violence during the 12 month period were about twice as likely as men who indicated violence during this same period to have contacted the police (41% versus 20%).

Women victims of spousal violence who are young, socially disadvantaged more likely to contact the police¹⁵

When looking at non-spousal violence cases, it is evident that those who are young are less likely than their older counterparts to report their victimization to the police (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005). However, for spousal violence the reverse is true. Young females aged 15 to 24 were most likely to report spousal violence to the police (50%), followed by those 25 to 34 (43%) and those 35 and older (36%) (Table 1.4).

Often linked to age, income and level of education are also correlated with police notification. Female victims of spousal violence who had a household income of less than \$30,000 were almost twice as likely to contact the police (54%) than those whose household income was over \$30,000 (29%) (Table 1.4). Linked to both age and income, the data also suggest that female victims of spousal violence with less than a high school education are more likely to turn to the police for help (55%), than those who completed university (23%) (Table 1.4).

The 2004 GSS also found that in the case of spousal violence against women, the police are more likely to be contacted if the victim is Aboriginal. One half of female victims of spousal violence who self-identified as Aboriginal reported that the police were contacted compared to 35% of their non-Aboriginal counterparts.

Victims of serious forms of spousal violence likely to report to police regardless of sex

Studies have shown that the seriousness or severity of a crime is the principal factor that influences police notification (Skogan, 1976; Fishman, 1979; Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Laub, 1981; Pino and Meier, 1999; Skogan 1984; and Sparks et al., 1977). According to the 2004 GSS, non-spousal violent crimes that resulted in injury, where a weapon was present, and that resulted in the victim having to take time off from their everyday activities were more likely to come to the attention of the police (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005). Similarly, GSS data show that those who experienced more serious acts of spousal violence and who suffered more serious consequences as a result of the violence were also more likely to report the violence to the police.

Results from the 2004 GSS show that women are more likely than men to experience more serious forms of violence such as being beaten, choked, threatened with or having a gun or knife used against them or sexually assaulted. However, both women and men who had suffered more serious forms of violence were equally likely to say that they contacted the police (54% and 56%) (Figure 1.8).

Gender differences in reporting to police widen considerably as the violence becomes less serious. For example, 43% of women who said that the most serious violence experienced involved being kicked, bit or hit, contacted the police. This figure drops to 18% of male victims reporting similar types of violence.

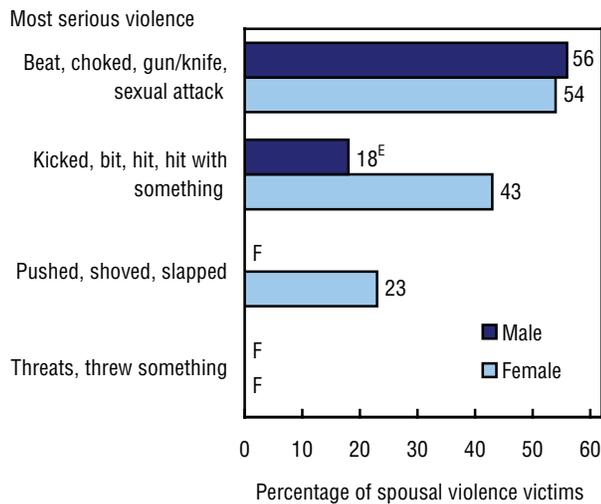
The point at which police reporting rates for women victims seem to taper off is when the most serious violence is being pushed, shoved or slapped, where 23% of female victims turned to police for help. The number of male victims who had these types of experiences and who reported to the police was too small to allow a reliable estimate. For both women and men who indicated that threats and having something thrown at them that could hurt them was the most serious violence endured, police-reporting rates were too small to permit reliable estimates.

Looking at other measures of severity such as injury and need for medical attention, it is evident that female and male victims of spousal violence have similar reporting patterns when the violence has a serious impact. Women were twice as likely as men to be injured as a result of spousal violence (44% versus 19%). However, when the abuse resulted in an injury, women and men were equally likely to report the violence to the police (50% of injured female victims and 43% of injured male victims). These rates compare to 26% of women and 12% of men who were not injured and still notified the police. Rates of police reporting were particularly high among those women who were injured and who also sought medical attention (74%).

No difference in rates of police reporting were found between women and men if they had to take time off from their everyday activities due to the spousal violence (64% versus 65%). However, women were about twice as likely as men to contact the police even if they did not have to take time off from their everyday activities (26% versus 12%). Police reporting rates were two and one half to three and one half times greater for both women and men who feared for their life compared to those who did not.

15. This analysis is limited to 12-month rates of wife assault. Twelve month rates of male spousal violence were too small to enable cross-tabulations by various socio-demographic characteristics.

Figure 1.8
Spousal violence victims most likely to report serious violence, 2004



^E use with caution (coefficient of variation is high 16.6% to 33.3%)
^F too unreliable to be published
Note: Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5-year period.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

Reporting increases with frequency of assaults

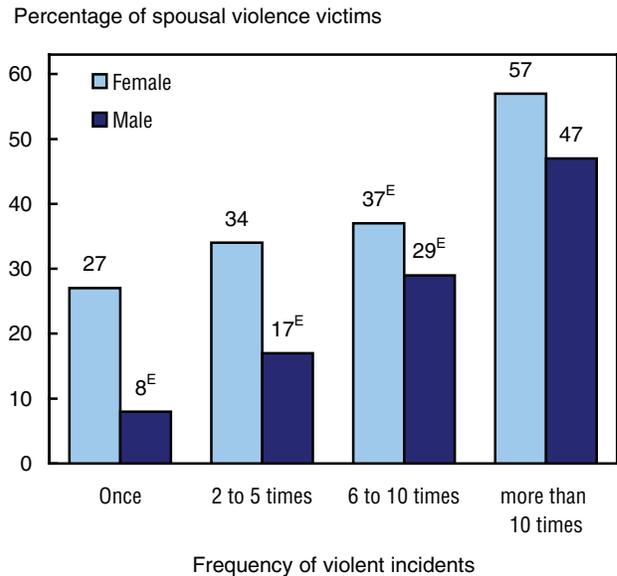
No matter how often the violence occurs, women are more likely than men to turn to the authorities for help. However, this gap narrows as the frequency of violent incidents increases. For spousal victims who experienced one incident of spousal violence, over one-quarter (27%) of women reported to police, compared with 8% of their male counterparts. In the case of spousal victims who experienced 2 to 5 violent episodes, women were twice as likely as men to contact the police for help (34% versus 17%) (Figure 1.9).

The gap between women and men reporting to police narrows even further when the violence occurs more than 10 times. More than one-half of women (57%) who experienced more than 10 incidents of spousal violence turned to police compared to 47% of men.

Notifying the police more likely if children witnessed the violence

Results from the 2004 GSS indicated that the presence of children in the home and children witnessing the violence increases the likelihood that female victims of spousal violence will contact the authorities. Women victims of spousal violence who indicated that their children witnessed the violence committed against them were more likely to notify the police than those who said that their children did not witness the violence (51% versus 30%). Police reporting rates were lowest among women who had no children (25%).

Figure 1.9
Rates of police reporting escalate with frequency of violence, 2004



^E use with caution (coefficient of variation is high 16.6% to 33.3%)
Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5-year period.
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

For male victims, the influence of children witnessing the violence on police reporting was not as evident. About one-third of male victims who said that their children witnessed the violence contacted the police. Rates of reporting to police among men who said that their children did not witness the violence were too small to produce reliable estimates, while 22% of those with no children notified the police. The difference in reporting rates for women and men when children were witnesses may be partially explained by the fact that, according to the GSS, children witnessed more serious violence against their mothers than their fathers (Mihorean, 2005), and as indicated earlier, seriousness is highly linked to police notification.

Stalking and reporting to police

Stalking¹⁶, also known as criminal harassment includes repeated behaviour that is carried out over a period of time that causes the victim to fear for their own personal safety or the safety of someone close to them. For the first time, the 2004 GSS asked respondents about their experiences of stalking. It was found that 61% of women who were stalked by an intimate partner also indicated that they had experienced violence by a current or previous spouse or

16. The prevalence of stalking or criminal harassment is measured differently through police and victimization data. Police data reflect those incidents that come to the attention of police, while victimization data reflect victims' accounts of incidents whether they were reported to police or not.

partner in the past 5 years (Mihorean, 2005), while for male victims of stalking this figure was 48%.

Given the element of fear associated with stalking, it is not surprising that almost three-quarters (71%) of women who were stalked and had experienced spousal violence in the past 5 years also indicated that they contacted the police.¹⁷

Partner drinking at time of violence increases likelihood of contacting police

The 2004 GSS data show that the use of alcohol, especially frequent and heavy use of alcohol, plays a significant role increasing the risk of spousal violence (Mihorean, 2005). While not a cause of violence, research has shown that excessive use of alcohol can interfere with how one interprets social cues and the ability to cope with stress, resulting in aggressive and violent behavior (Gelles, 1974; Gelles and Straus, 1988). According to the 2004 GSS, 44% of women with current or previous violent partners reported that their partner was drinking at the time of the violence, and about one-quarter (24%) of male victims reported that their partner had been drinking (Mihorean, 2005).

The use of alcohol by an abusive partner increased the likelihood of the victim contacting the police. While both males and females were more likely to contact the police if their abusive partner had been using alcohol, alcohol use seems to impact the likelihood of males reporting more than females. For example, 33% of male victims of spousal violence whose partner had been drinking contacted the police, compared to 13% whose partner had not been drinking. In the case of female victims, even though the proportion of females reporting was higher than for male victims, regardless of whether their partner had been drinking or not, the difference in reporting to police was not as large as in the case of male victims. Specifically, 44% of female victims whose partner had been drinking at the time of the violence contacted the police versus 30% whose partner had not been drinking.

Emotional impact influences reporting to police

There are a number of measures related to the overall emotional impact of spousal violence captured through the 2004 GSS. These measures are insightful in terms of identifying certain factors beyond physical harm that can influence decisions to contact the police. Generally women, regardless of the emotional impact, are more likely than male victims to report to the police. There are, however, a few exceptions.

The main emotional impact that male victims experienced and that were most often associated with police reporting included: depression (62%) and lowered self-esteem due to the violence (61%). For female victims the emotional impact that seemed to have the greatest influence on contacting the police was having problems relating to men (66%), feeling

victimized (62%), being afraid for the children (58%) and being ashamed or feeling guilty (58%).¹⁸

Impact of community type and relationships with neighbours on rates of police reporting

Many researchers have tested the theory that the propensity to report a crime to the police would be higher in urban areas than in rural areas given that rural victims would be more likely to rely on informal networks and view the police as outsiders (Baumer, 2002, Laub, 1981, Fishman, 1979). Research has refuted these assumptions, finding that in fact rates of police reporting are not influenced by urban-rural residency. Instead they have found that one of the strongest determinants for whether a victim chooses to turn to the police is the severity of the incident. As indicated above, the GSS also shows that several indicators of the severity of the violence experienced by an intimate partner are highly correlated with a victim's decision to turn to the police for help.

The 2004 GSS results also support the notion that the likelihood of reporting to the police is not influenced by the victim's urban-rural residency (Table 1.4). Regardless of residency, other measures can be used to assess the extent to which community might influence reporting to the police, including how well people know their neighbours, the nature of these relationships, informal contacts and service availability. Each of these factors can be considered measures related to a person's community ties and networks.

For female victims of spousal violence¹⁹, there is a link between the length of time that one has lived in a dwelling and police notification, but not between how many people one knows in their neighborhood and contacting police. For example, female victims of spousal violence who lived in their dwelling for less than one year were twice as likely to indicate that the police were contacted about the violence as those who lived in their dwelling for a longer period of time (62% versus about 30%). In the case of how many people one knows in their neighborhood, there was no difference in the proportion of victims who reported to the police between those who knew few or no neighbours, and those who knew many or most of their neighbours (41% respectively). Therefore, simply knowing your neighbours does not significantly affect police reporting rates, while length of residency in a neighborhood does.

Within the literature there are two schools of thought on informal social controls and police notification. First, there are those who argue that individuals with weak informal

17. The figure for male victims of stalking and spousal violence was too small to allow a reliable estimate.

18. Rates of police reporting for male victims who indicated these impacts were too small to enable reliable estimates.

19. Rates for male victims of spousal violence were too small to enable reliable estimates.

social controls may feel isolated and not contact the police because they feel that the police would be unlikely to respond, and even if they did, would likely not take their complaint seriously (Anderson, 1999). Second, others have suggested that neighborhoods with ineffective informal social controls may, in fact, need to rely more on the police to help settle disputes and reduce future victimization (Black, 1976, 1998; Conklin, 1975; Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Laub, 1981), therefore these victims are more likely to report violent crimes to the police.

Considering the use of support services by victims in the community and their influence on contacting the authorities such as crisis centres, victim services and shelters, the GSS shows a positive relationship between contacting these services for help and notifying the police about the violence. For example, compared to female victims who did not contact any services, those who did were twice as likely to have also reported the violence to the authorities (51% versus 24%). In the case of male victims, those who contacted a formal helping agency were more than three and one half times more likely to report the abuse to the police (42% versus 12%) (Table 1.5). These results may be partially explained by the use of inter-agency referrals used in many communities.

Similar to helping agencies, interactions with informal supports also have a positive influence on a victim's decision to contact the police about the violence. In other words, victims of spousal violence who said that they talked to family, friends, co-workers, medical staff, lawyer or minister, priest or clergy about the violence were much more likely to also have reported to the police than those who had not talked to others. Female victims who talked to others about the violence were more than twice as likely to notify the police as those who did not confide in an informal support. Male victims who confided in an informal support about the violence were 2 to 6 times more likely than their male counterparts who did not talk to another informal support to contact the police (Table 1.5).

These findings refute some of the literature that suggests that those who access informal social supports are less likely to report to the police. However, a recent study found that this theory only held true for less serious forms of assault, since it was found that community disadvantage or the availability of informal supports did not affect whether victims elected to notify the police about the more serious crimes of robbery and aggravated assault (Baumer, 2002).

Victims' attitudes towards police and police notification

Various researchers have examined the relationship between victims' attitudes towards the police and reporting incidents to authorities (Fishman, 1979; Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta, 2004). Fishman (1979) found that neither positive nor negative attitudes towards the police significantly affect co-operation between the victim and the police. In contrast, Goudriaan et al. (2004) found that while attitudes toward the police have no impact on a victim's decision to report a violent crime, there was a positive influence on reporting property crimes.

Overall, when victims of spousal violence were asked how satisfied they were with the actions the police took, female and male victims held similar views. About two-thirds of both female and male victims said that they were somewhat or very satisfied with police actions, while one-third said that they were either somewhat or very dissatisfied. However, when they are asked about their attitudes towards how good a job their local police are doing at various tasks, the results vary.

There are some significant differences in the attitudes towards the police among those who notify the authorities. Attitudes among male victims of spousal violence related to the police's performance of being approachable yielded the most significant results. Specifically, male victims who reported to the police were twice as likely as those who did not report to rate the police as doing a poor job at being approachable (35% versus 17%).

One would expect that those who held more negative views towards police performance would be *less* rather than *more* likely to report. Possible explanations for these results could include that reporting to the police is in fact not related to the person's perceptions of the police, but rather to the seriousness of the violence. Therefore, regardless of a spousal victim's negative perception of the police, if the violence experienced was serious enough to require police intervention to reduce future risk of victimization, victims will notify the police.

Table 1.1
Number of violent crimes reported to a subset of police departments, by sex of victim and relationship to accused, 2004^{1,2,3}

Relationship of victim to accused	Victims					
	Total		Sex of victims			
			Female		Male	
number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	
Total victims of violent crime	191,614	100	94,699	100	96,915	100
Total family	47,379	25	34,924	37	12,455	13
Total spouse⁴	27,940	15	23,368	25	4,572	5
Current spouse ^{4,5}	17,776	9	14,966	16	2,810	3
Ex-spouse ^{4,6}	10,164	5	8,402	9	1,762	2
Total other family	19,439	10	11,556	12	7,883	8
Parent ⁷	7,194	4	4,170	4	3,024	3
Child ⁷	3,676	2	2,463	3	1,213	1
Sibling ⁸	5,108	3	2,931	3	2,177	2
Extended family ⁹	3,461	2	1,992	2	1,469	2
Total friends/acquaintances	75,832	40	36,490	39	39,342	41
Boyfriend/girlfriend	6,417	3	5,347	6	1,070	1
Ex-boyfriend/girlfriend	5,186	3	4,340	5	846	1
Close friend	6,666	3	3,874	4	2,792	3
Business relationship	10,591	6	3,810	4	6,781	7
Casual acquaintance	43,966	23	18,030	19	25,936	27
Criminal relationship	1,025	1	165	0	860	1
Authority figure	1,981	1	924	1	1,057	1
Stranger	50,253	26	15,806	17	34,447	36
Unknown¹⁰	18,150	9	7,479	8	10,671	11

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown.

2. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.

3. Violent crimes include violations causing death, attempted murder, sexual assaults, assaults, robbery, criminal harassment, uttering threats and other violations involving violence or the threat of violence.

4. Current spouse and ex-spouse categories include victims aged 15 to 98.

5. Current spouse includes legally married and common-law partners.

6. Ex-spouse includes separated and divorced partners.

7. Includes incidents where age of the victim or the relationship to the accused may have been miscoded.

8. Sibling includes natural, step, half, foster or adopted brother or sister.

9. Extended family includes others related to the victim either by blood or marriage, e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins and in-laws.

10. Unknown includes incidents where the relationship between the victim and the accused is unknown.

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 1.2

Incidents of spousal violence for one time, repeat and chronic contacts with police by offence type, reported to a subset of police departments, 1995 to 2004

Type of offence	Total		One time ¹		Repeat (2 to 4 incidents) ²		Chronic (5 or more incidents) ³	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Homicide/attempt	855	0.4	609	0.5	225	0.3	21	0.2
Sexual assault	3,062	1	1,764	1	1,096	2	202	2
Major assault (assault levels 2 and 3)	29,272	14	17,984	14	9,528	14	1,760	16
Common assault (assault level 1)	137,857	65	88,046	67	43,188	62	6,623	59
Criminal harassment	14,806	7	8,131	6	5,764	8	911	8
Uttering threats	20,579	10	11,604	9	7,656	11	1,319	12
Other violent offences ⁴	5,360	3	2,882	2	2,076	3	402	4
Total offences	211,791	100	131,020	100	69,533	100	11,238	100

1. Refers to single incidents of spousal violence that were brought to the attention of police during the 10-year timeframe.

2. Repeat police contact includes 2 to 4 incidents of spousal violence that were brought to the attention of police during the 10-year timeframe.

3. Chronic police contact includes 5 or more incidents of spousal violence that were brought to the attention of police during the 10-year timeframe.

4. Other violent offences include robbery, unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing death, criminal negligence causing bodily harm, other assaults, kidnapping, hostage-taking, explosives causing death/bodily harm, arson, and other violent violations.

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Excludes incidents where the sex of the victim was unknown.

Includes victims aged 15 to 98.

Spousal violence refers to violence committed by legally married, common-law, separated and divorced partners.

Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 64 police departments representing 44% of the national volume of crime.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 10-year data file.

Table 1.3

Method of violence causing the most serious injury to the victim in spousal violence incidents, reported to a subset of police departments, 1995 to 2004

Type of weapon	Total		One time ¹		Repeat (2 to 4 incidents) ²		Chronic (5 or more incidents) ³	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Physical force	106,880	50	65,678	50	35,380	51	5,822	52
No weapon	70,365	33	42,862	33	23,539	34	3,964	35
Unknown ⁴	9,822	5	5,769	4	3,464	5	589	5
Weapons								
Firearms	358	0	250	0	99	0	9	0
Knife, other piercing cutting instrument	5,068	2	3,376	3	1,474	2	218	2
Club/blunt instrument	4,244	2	2,759	2	1,275	2	210	2
Other weapon ⁵	15,054	7	10,326	8	4,302	6	426	4
Total victims of spousal violence	211,791	100	131,020	100	69,533	100	11,238	100

1. Refers to single incidents of spousal violence that were brought to the attention of police during the 10-year timeframe.

2. Repeat police contact includes 2 to 4 incidents of spousal violence that were brought to the attention of police during the 10-year timeframe.

3. Chronic police contact includes 5 or more incidents of spousal violence that were brought to the attention of police during the 10-year timeframe.

4. The weapon was not known, the weapon involved did not cause physical injury, or no weapon was involved in the incident.

5. Includes other types of weapons such as explosives, fire, motor vehicle or poison.

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Excludes incidents where the sex of the victim was unknown.

Includes victims aged 15 to 98.

Spousal violence refers to violence committed by legally married, common-law, separated and divorced partners.

Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 64 police departments representing 44% of the national volume of crime.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 10-year file.

Table 1.4
Personal characteristics of female victims who reported spousal violence to police, last 12 months, 2004

	Sex of victim	
	Female	
	number (thousands)	percent of the population
Total female victims of spousal violence who reported to police	79	41
Age group of victim		
15 to 24	18	50 ^E
25 to 34	21	43 ^E
35 and over	40	36
Household income		
Less than \$30,000	27	54
\$30,000 to \$59,999	19	29 ^E
\$60,000 or more	13	29 ^E
Not stated/don't know	20	57 ^E
Education of victim		
Less than high school	19	55 ^E
High school diploma	13	37 ^E
Some post secondary ¹	36	43
University degree	9	23 ^E
Not stated/don't know	F	F
Place of residence of victim		
Urban	20	41
Rural	59	40 ^E

^E use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

^F too unreliable to be published

1. Some post secondary includes diploma, a certificate from a community college, or a trade/technical school.

Note: Includes women who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 12 months.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

Table 1.5

Number and percentage of women and men aged 15 years and over who reported violence to police, by those who choose to use or not use formal or informal support services, past 5 years, 2004¹

	Victims who reported violence to police											
	With agency or community support						Without agency or community support					
	All		Female		Male		All		Female		Male	
	no. (000s)	%	no. (000s)	%	no. (000s)	%	no. (000s)	%	no. (000s)	%	no. (000s)	%
Any formal support services	201	49	155	51	45	42	131	17	81	24	50	12
Crisis Centre	85	70	69	70	16	71	247	23	168	31	79	15
Counsellor or psychologist	155	47	118	49	37	41	177	21	119	29	58	13
Community or Family Centre	70	64	56	62	14	75	262	24	181	32	81	16
Any informal support	308	35	222	41	86	26	25	8	16	15	9	4
Family	258	38	185	42	73	31	74	15	52	25	22	7 ^E
Friend or neighbour	249	39	183	44	66	29	82	15	54	23	28	9 ^E
Co-worker	102	39	62	43	41	35	230	25	175	35	54	13
Doctor or nurse	152	59	119	61	33	52	178	19	116	26	62	13
Lawyer	133	65	91	63	43	69	199	20	146	29	52	11
Minister, priest, clergy or spiritual advisor	47	41	34	44	13	34 ^E	286	27	204	36	82	16

^E use with caution, coefficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%)

1. Includes women and men who experienced violence by a current or previous partner in the past 5 year period.

Note: Figures do not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

2.0 Family violence against children and youth

by Rebecca Kong

Abuse, neglect and witnessing violence in the home can negatively impact a child in a number of ways. These events can result in problems in social and cognitive development, aggressive behaviour, a reduction of success in life, an increased risk of delinquency, and an increased risk of victimization by others later in life (Health Canada, 1997; Health Canada, 2004; Hotton, 2003; Dauvergne and Johnson, 2001; Widom and Maxfield, 2001; Ristock, 1995; Carlson, 1991; Jaffe et al, 1986; Rodgers, 1994).

Child abuse and the maltreatment of children and youth cover a range of harmful behaviours such as physical assault, sexual assault, emotional or psychological abuse, neglect and witnessing violence. Since the 1960s, there has been a continuous evolution in legislation, policies and procedures to address and prevent child abuse and neglect (Department of Justice Canada, 2005). Today, behaviours such as physical and sexual assault and some forms of neglect are prohibited by both the *Criminal Code of Canada* and provincial and territorial child welfare legislation. Other behaviours deemed harmful to children's well-being, such as emotional and psychological abuse, neglect and witnessing violence are dealt with by child welfare legislation. Despite continuous development in child protection initiatives, it is still difficult to measure the prevalence of child abuse in Canada due to children's dependency on others to detect and report their abuse.

Currently in Canada, measurements of child abuse and neglect are based on data reported to the authorities. Such data include information on physical and sexual assaults reported by the police to the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) survey. Also available is data on child maltreatment and neglect reported by child welfare agencies to the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS). Police-reported data reflect incidents that come to the attention of police and include both the incidents that occurred in the year they were reported, as well as those where a victim reported abuse which occurred in a previous year. Incidents reported to the CIS comprise cases reported to child welfare agencies and include cases of physical and sexual assault, neglect and children witnessing violence. The first part of this chapter will provide an analysis of the nature and extent of physical and sexual assaults against children (under 18 years of age), based

on data reported by a non-representative sample of police departments reporting to the UCR2 Survey.¹ The second part of this chapter will present findings from the 2003 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, a study based on cases reported to child welfare agencies.

2.1 An overview of police-reported violence against children and youth

Prevalence of police-reported violence against children and youth

The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics collects data on violence against children and youth under 18 years of age through the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) survey. These data reflect both physical and sexual assault offences that came to the attention of the police and which were substantiated by the police. Other types of abuse, such as emotional and psychological abuse or witnessing violence, are not offences chargeable under the *Criminal Code*, and are therefore not included in this analysis. The UCR2 survey provides details on the types of assaults experienced by children and youth, the relationship of the accused person to the victim, the characteristics of child and youth victims and the characteristics of the person accused of harming them. In 2004, the UCR2 survey collected complete data from 120 police services across Canada. Of these, 119 provided reliable data on the relationship of the accused to the victim and represented 53% of the national volume of crime that year.

Data from this subset of 119 police services suggest that, overall, children and youth are more at risk of physical and sexual assault than adults. For every 100,000 children and youth who resided in the areas policed by the police services reporting to the UCR2 survey in 2004, 775 were

1. Children and youth are often victims of other incidents of violence not presented here including criminal harassment, robbery, uttering threats and abductions. For more detailed information on violence against children and youth, including violence perpetrated by non-family members, refer to AuCoin, K. 2005. "Children and youth as victims of violent crime." *Juristat*. Catalogue no. 85-002-XPE, Vol. 25 no. 1 Ottawa: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. For information on child victims of family-related homicides, see Chapter 4 of this report.

either physically or sexually assaulted (Table 2.1).² This compares to a rate of 631 among adults. Although rates for children and youth were higher for both physical and sexual assault, the disparity in rates is much greater for sexual assault (200 per 100,000 children and youth versus 34 per 100,000 adults).

Among children under 18 years of age, girls were at greatest risk of sexual assault, whereas the rate for physical assault was higher for boys. Girls were over 4 times more likely to be sexually assaulted than boys (327 versus 79 per 100,000 population) (Table 2.2).³ The rate of physical assault among boys was 50% higher than the rate for girls (696 versus 447 per 100,000).

According to the subset of 119 police services reporting to the UCR2 survey in 2004, children's risk of physical and sexual assault increases with age. That year, for every 100,000 toddlers under the age of 3, police reported 126 victims of physical and sexual assault (Table 2.1). Rates grew to 419 per 100,000 children aged 3 to 11 years, and then to 1,504 per 100,000 youth aged 12 to 17 years. This trend is not surprising given that children are increasingly exposed to others and acquire more independence as they grow up, increasing their risk of victimization. Further, police-reported data, like any other data that reflect reporting to the authorities, may undercount victimization among very young children because of children's dependence on others to detect and report crimes against them.

Child and youth victims most likely to know their aggressor

Overall, police-reported data suggest that children are most likely to be physically or sexually assaulted by someone they know, and least likely to be victimized by a stranger. For every 100,000 children and youth residing in the areas policed by the 119 police services reporting to the UCR2 survey in 2004, 376 had been assaulted by someone known to them other than a family member, 196 by a family member and 120 by a stranger (Table 2.2).⁴ Overall, this pattern was true for sexual assaults, although there was little difference among boys in the rate of sexual assault by family members versus other known persons (29 versus 35 per 100,000 population). Among child and youth victims of physical assault, it is notable that male children showed higher rates of assault by a stranger than by a family member (142 versus 123 per 100,000 population).

Rate of family-related assaults decreases with age as children's exposure to others widens

Although children and youth overall were at greatest risk of assault by friends and acquaintances, there were differences across age groups. Very young children have a small social circle, are very dependant upon a few key figures in their lives, such as parents, caregivers and teachers, and are not likely to venture out unsupervised by these key figures. It is not surprising, then, that children

under the age of 9 are at greatest risk of physical and sexual assault by a family member, followed by a friend or acquaintance (Table 2.3). As children grow up and their social interactions and relationships move beyond family members, they no longer pose the greatest risk and the likelihood of being physically or sexually assaulted by others, including strangers, becomes most prevalent. As illustrated in Table 2.3, 9 to 11 year olds were more likely to be victimized by a friend or acquaintance than a family member. Among 12 to 14 year olds and 15 to 17 year olds, not only did rates of physical and sexual assault by friends or acquaintances continue to be highest, but they also grew substantially over the rates for 9 to 11 year olds. The shift from victimization by family members to non-family members as children age is particularly evident for physical assaults.

2.2 Police-reported family violence against children and youth

Rates of violence by parents highest compared to other family relationships

Data from the 119 police services reporting to the UCR2 survey indicate that among victims of family violence, children and youth are at greatest risk of physical and sexual assault by parents.⁵ In 2004, for every 100,000 children and youth in the subset of police services, 119 were physically or sexually assaulted by a parent (Table 2.4). In comparison, 43 per 100,000 children and youth were victimized by a sibling and rates for assaults by extended family members and current or previous spouses⁶ were lower (28 and 6 per 100,000 population, respectively).

Children and youth were more likely to have been physically assaulted by a parent than sexually assaulted. The rate of physical assault by a parent was more than 3 times higher than the rate of sexual assault (Table 2.4). While

2. Sexual assault includes sexual assault (level 1), sexual assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), aggravated sexual assault (level 3) and the "other sexual crimes" category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc. Physical assault includes common assault (level 1), assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), aggravated assault (level 3), unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.

3. These findings are consistent with recent research highlighting the over-representation of female victims of sexual assault (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005; AuCoin, 2005; Kong et al., 2003; Locke, 2002; Finkelhor and Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994).

4. It should be noted that "friends" and "acquaintances" can include persons who are friends or acquaintances of the parents or the family in general.

5. Parent includes natural, step, half, foster or adoptive parents. This category includes a small number of victims under 18 years where the relationship of the accused to the victim was miscoded as "child" and should have been coded as "parent"

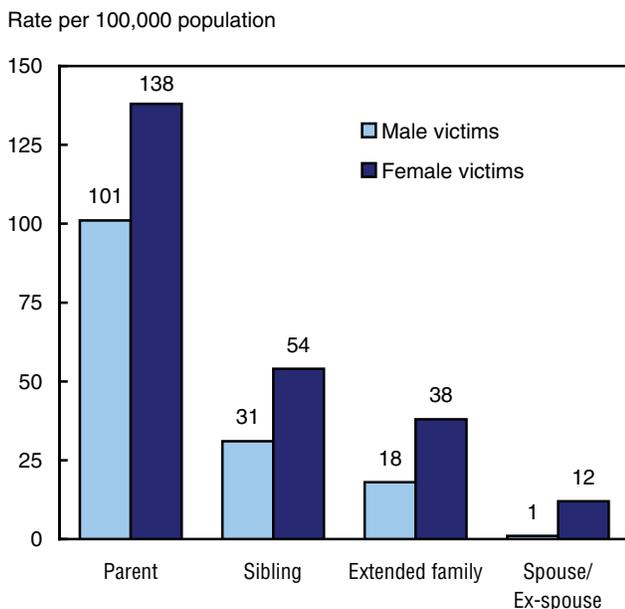
6. Spouses/ex-spouses include legally married and common-law unions, as well as separated and divorced partners. Census data show that teenagers within this category are overwhelmingly living in a common-law relationship. Rates are calculated per 100,000 population for the geographic areas policed by the 119 UCR2 respondents rather than by marital status as population counts by marital status are not available for this geographic level.

children and youth were almost equally likely to have been physically as sexually assaulted by a sibling⁷ (22 versus 21 per 100,000), they were more at risk of sexual assault than physical assault by an extended family member⁸ (18 versus 10 per 100,000).

Girls at higher risk of family-related sexual assault than boys

The data from the UCR2 survey also show that girls are at greater risk of family violence than boys because of the higher prevalence of sexual assault against girls. In 2004, for every 100,000 girls residing in the subset of 119 police services reporting to the UCR2 survey, 242 were physically or sexually assaulted by a family member, compared to a rate of 152 for boys (Table 2.2). Rates for girls were higher, regardless of the relationship of the family member (Figure 2.1). This overall difference was driven by the fact that girls were sexually assaulted by a family member at a rate that was almost 4 times the rate among boys (110 versus 29 per 100,000) (Table 2.2). The risk of sexual assault was higher for girls than for boys regardless of the type of family relationship (Figure 2.2).

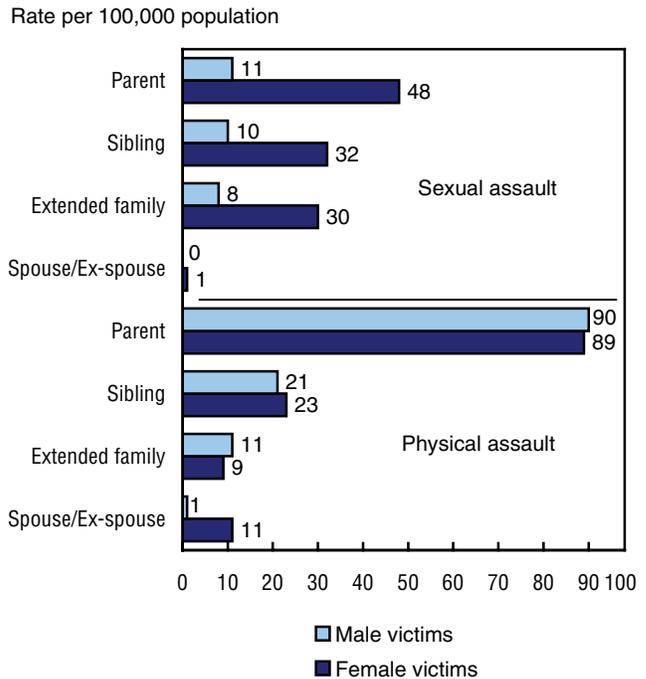
Figure 2.1
Rates of family violence higher for girls than for boys, regardless of relationship, 2004



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown. Includes children and youth under the age of 18. Excludes incidents where the relationship between the victim and accused was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004. Includes victims of either physical or sexual assault. Rate per 100,000 population for the geographic areas policed by the UCR2 respondents, based on populations provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Figure 2.2
Boys and girls are equally likely to be physically assaulted by a parent, 2004



Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown. Includes children and youth under the age of 18. Excludes incidents where the relationship between the victim and accused was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004. Rate per 100,000 population for the geographic areas policed by the UCR2 respondents, based on populations provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Pre-teen and young teenage girls and young boys at greatest risk of family-related sexual assault

An incident of child abuse committed by a family member may remain undetected until the child is at an age where he/she can disclose the situation to others, or when the child's social circle widens to include others who may suspect abuse (e.g. teachers, friends' parents, etc.). As such, it is not surprising that police-reported rates of child physical and sexual assault suggest that child abuse increases with age.

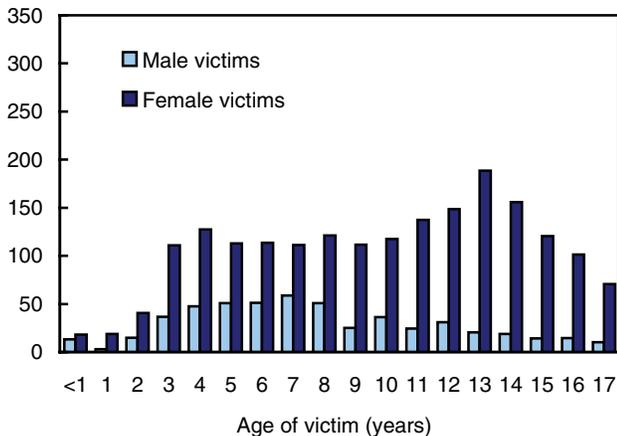
In cases of family-related sexual assaults, rates for girls grew steadily after the age of 9, reaching the highest rate at age 13 (188 per 100,000 females), and decreased steadily thereafter (Figure 2.3). This increase was driven largely by a growth in the number of girls sexually assaulted by parents,

7. Sibling includes natural, step, half, foster or adoptive siblings.
8. Extended family includes others related by blood, marriage, adoption or foster care.

while the decrease was a result of declines across all three types of family relationships. For male victims of sexual assault, rates were most prevalent among boys 4 to 8 years of age, of which boys aged 7 experienced the highest rate (59 per 100,000 males) of sexual assault.

Figure 2.3
Family-related sexual assault rates highest for pre-teen and teenage girls and for young boys, 2004

Rate per 100,000 males and females



Notes: Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown. Excludes victims where the relationship of the accused was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004. Rate per 100,000 population under the age of 18, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Higher rates of family-related physical assault against older teenage girls

Overall, the risk of physical assault by a family member was also higher for girls than for boys (132 versus 123 per 100,000), a difference which is the result of spousal violence experienced by older teenage girls. As illustrated in Table 2.2, rates of physical assault by a parent were equal among boys and girls. While rates of physical assault by a sibling and extended family member were much lower, they too did not differ according to gender. Despite being low compared to other family-related violence, the rate of spousal assault among young females was nevertheless over 10 times the rate for young males (11 versus 1 per 100,000) (Figure 2.2).

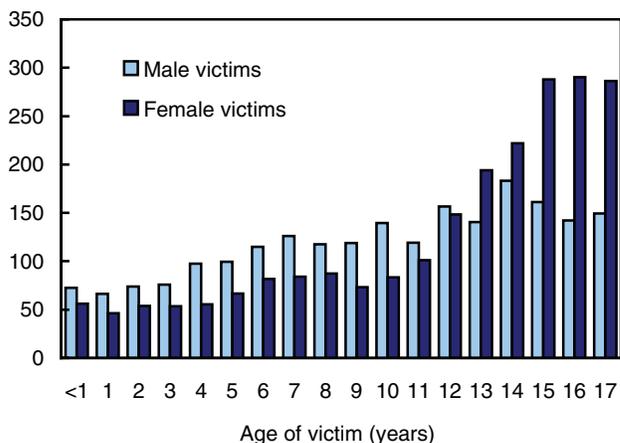
Compared to boys, girls are at lower risk of family-related assaults up to the age of 10, and then the risk for girls escalates. As shown in Figure 2.4, the rate of family-related physical assault against girls climbed steadily from 83 per 100,000 girls at age 10 to 288 per 100,000 girls at 15 years of age, with rates remaining stable thereafter. The increase in the rate for girls between the ages of 10 and 14 is driven

largely by increases in the number of girls assaulted by parents. The jump in rate from age 14 to 15 is due not only to increases in the number of girls assaulted by parents, but also an increase in those assaulted by immediate family members and the beginning of assaults by what is classified as spouses or ex-spouses according to the UCR2 survey (meaning partners in the case of teenage girls). For girls aged 16 and 17, physical assaults by a parent actually decreased while the incidence of spousal violence grew.

Among boys, rates of physical assault fluctuate from one age to another and show a more gradual increase up to age 14, when the rate for boys peaks at 183 per 100,000. The rate then decreases slightly at age 15, due to fewer male youth assaulted by parents, and remains relatively stable.

Figure 2.4
Rates of family-related physical assaults increase with age, especially for teenage girls, 2004

Rate per 100,000 males and females



Notes: Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown. Excludes victims where the relationship of the accused was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004. Rate per 100,000 population under the age of 18, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Males commit majority of family-related violence⁹

Police-reported statistics suggest that male family members represent the majority (81%) of accused in all family-related assaults. Sexual assaults against children and youth by a family member overwhelmingly involved a male relative (97%). In contrast, 73% of physical assaults were perpetrated by a male relative.

9. Due to the structure of the victim and accused records on the UCR2 survey database, analysis of characteristics of the accused in this section is based only on situations where there was a single accused and a single victim. These represent 4,219 of the 8,092 (52%) child and youth victims of family-related physical and sexual assaults.

With respect to physical assaults, males accounted for the majority of accused in all types of relationships. For instance, 70% of children physically assaulted by a parent were assaulted by their father¹⁰ and 78% assaulted by a sibling were assaulted by a brother. Among children assaulted by an extended family member, 7 in 10 were assaulted by a male. Males also accounted for the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of spousal violence against youth (95%).

For incidents where male family members were involved in physical assaults, fathers were the most commonly accused (63%), followed by brothers (21%), spouses/ex-spouses (9%) and extended family members (7%). In incidents of sexual assault, fathers were involved in 38% of all sexual assaults, followed by brothers (30%), male extended family members (30%) and spouses/ex-spouses (1%).

Women accounted for fewer perpetrators of family-related assaults. In 2004, 3% of child and youth victims of family-related sexual assault were victimized by a female family member, as were 27% of child and youth victims of physical assault. Of the victims who were physically assaulted by a female family member, almost three-quarters (74%) were assaulted by their mother, 15% by a sister, 8% by an extended family member and 1% by a spouse/ex-spouse.

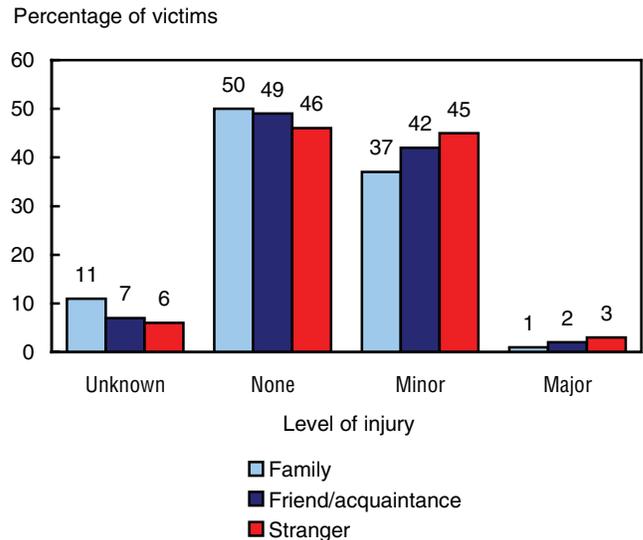
Few children and youth sustain a major injury

According to the 2004 police-reported data, children and youth who were victimized were more likely to be physically injured by a non-family member than by a family member. Among child and youth victims of family violence where either a weapon or physical force had been used against them, half sustained no injury. Almost four in ten children and youth victims (37%) suffered minor injuries¹¹ and 1% of children and youth suffered major injuries¹² (Figure 2.5). In comparison, among children and youth victimized by someone known to them, almost the same proportion (49%) sustained no physical injury, whereas a greater proportion had a minor injury (42%), and 2% had a major injury. The likelihood of physical injuries was slightly higher among children and youth victimized by strangers, with 45% reporting minor injuries and 3% suffering major injuries (46% had no injuries). For 9% of all child and youth victims, the level of injury was unknown meaning it could not be determined by police although physical force or weapons were used against the victims.

Police were more likely to report injury among victims of family-related physical assault (54%) than family-related sexual assault (9%). One explanation for this could be that the injuries sustained by a victim of physical assault are more visible and are therefore easier to report. This is supported by the fact that police were more likely to indicate that the level of injury could not be determined for victims of sexual assault (17%) than physical assault (9%), despite knowing that either physical force or weapons had been used against the victim.

Rates of injury did not differ between boys and girls. While 53% of female victims of family-related physical assault sustained injury, the same was true for 54% of males. For child and youth victims of family-related sexual assault, 10% of females and 8% of males had an injury.

Figure 2.5
Child and youth victims of non-family assaults are more likely to be injured, 2004



Notes: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown, and where neither weapons nor physical force were used against the victim. Excludes incidents where the relationship between the victim and accused was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004. Includes victims of physical and sexual assault.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Children under two years of age more likely to sustain major injuries

While the occurrence of major injuries was rare among child and youth victims of family violence, the risk of a major injury was highest for children under 2 years of age. Overall, 14% of victims under 2 years old had a major injury (12% of girls and 15% of boys). The highest rates of major injury were reported for infants under 1 year of age (19%), while one year olds suffered the second highest rate (8%). Rates of major injury among all other ages ranged from nil to 2%.

The elevated risk of serious harm for infants is further demonstrated by homicide statistics which have shown that every year children under 1 year are at far greater risk of homicide by a family member than children of any other age. Homicide statistics also show that infants are most

10. See footnote 5.

11. Minor injuries are defined as those that require no professional medical treatment or only some first aid.

12. Major injuries are defined as those that require professional medical attention at the scene or transportation to a medical facility.

likely to be killed by Shaken Baby Syndrome, suggesting that perhaps Shaken Baby Syndrome can be attributed to the high prevalence of major injury among infants assaulted by family members.¹³

Physical force is the most prevalent cause of injury

According to data from the 119 police services reporting data for 2004, injuries were most often caused by the use of physical force. Of the 4,012 child and youth victims of family violence who were injured, three-quarters (75%) were injured as a result of physical force. This was true for 77% of child and youth victims of physical assault and 66% of victims of sexual assault. For victims of physical assault, a club or other blunt instrument caused injury for 4% of victims, a knife or other cutting instrument for 2% of victims, other types of weapons caused injury to 12%, and the weapon causing injury was unknown for 5% of victims.¹⁴ For about three in ten victims of sexual assault (31%), the weapon that caused injury was unknown, while less than 1% were injured by a knife or other cutting instrument. Police indicated that 3% of young victims of family-related sexual assaults who sustained injury were harmed by the use of other types of weapons.¹⁵

Trends in family violence against children and youth

As the number of police services reporting to the UCR2 survey is continuously evolving, an analysis of trend information from this survey is limited to the number of police services that have been consistently reporting to the survey over a number of years. As of 2004, there were 68 police services across Canada who had reported consistently since 1998 and these represented 37% of the national volume of crime. According to these non-representative data, the rate of family-related sexual assaults against children and youth inched up 3% in 2004, while rates of physical assault grew 5%. In contrast, the rate for non-family sexual assaults decreased 1% and the rate for physical assault dipped 5%.¹

This limited time series indicates that each year rates of non-family sexual assault have been about two times the rate of family-related sexual assaults. Similarly, rates of children and youth that were physically assaulted by non-family members have been about 3 times the rate of family-related assaults.

1. The category of non-family excludes victims where the relationship of the accused to the victim was "unknown".

13. See Chapter 4 of this report for an analysis of family-related homicides among children and youth.

14. Examples of other weapons include belts or whips, fire/hot objects, motor vehicles, poison or objects that may be used for strangulation. A firearm was used against less than 1% of child and youth victims of family-related physical assault who were injured.

15. No firearms or clubs/blunt instruments were used to cause injury to child and youth victims of family-related sexual assault.

Parenting style and its effects on children's behaviour: results from a recent study

The effects of family violence on children are of considerable interest in terms of understanding its influence on children's well-being and chances of success in life. Past studies have shown that children who witness violence in the home are at greater risk of behaving aggressively than children who are not exposed to such violence (Hotton, 2003; Dauvergne and Johnson, 2001).

A more recent Statistics Canada study supports the theory that children who live in homes where punitive parenting techniques are used are more likely than other children to exhibit aggressive behaviour.¹ According to the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, children aged 2 and 3 years old who lived in punitive environments in 1994 scored 39% higher on a scale of aggressive behaviours (e.g. bullying and being mean to others) than did those in less punitive environments.² The effects were even more evident six years later in 2000 when the children were 8 or 9 years old and scored 83% higher on the behaviour scale than those in less punitive homes.

The study also suggests that improvements in parenting style can curb aggressive behaviour in children. It found that where parenting style changed from punitive at ages 2 and 3 to non-punitive at ages 8 and 9, children scored just as low in aggressive behaviour as children whose parenting environment was non-punitive at both ages. However, the reverse is also true: children whose parenting environment changed from non-punitive at toddler age to punitive at ages 8 and 9 scored just as high in aggressive behaviour as children living in punitive homes at both ages.

Regardless of the child's sex or household income level, the study found that children's behaviour is linked to parenting style. Boys and girls were equally likely to experience punitive parenting and exhibit aggressive behaviour as a result. Although toddlers aged 2 to 3 years old living in low-income households in 1994 had higher aggressive behaviour scores than their counterparts living in higher income households, this difference in scores vanished six years later when the children reached 8 or 9 years of age. Finally, the study found that parenting style did not differ by income. The chance of a child being raised in a punitive parenting environment was the same for low-income and higher income households.

1. For more information, refer to Thomas, E. M. 2004. *Aggressive Behaviour Outcomes for Young Children: Change in the Parenting Environment Predicts Changes in Behaviour*. Catalogue no. 89-599-MIE-001. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

2. Punitive parenting was measured by asking parents how frequently they used physical punishment, or yelled or shouted at their child, and how often they calmly discussed the problem or described more acceptable behaviour to the child. Responses were tallied to create a punitive parenting practices score for the child's home. For the purposes of this study, a parenting style was considered to be punitive if the score was at or above the score nearest to the 90th percentile. To measure aggressive behaviour, parents were asked how often their child behaved or reacted in aggressive ways, such as getting into fights, bullying or being mean to others. A score for aggressive behaviour was calculated from their responses to these questions.

2.3 Overview of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS), 2003¹⁶

by Lil Tonmyr, Barbara Fallon and Nico Trocmé

The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS) provides national estimates of child abuse and neglect reported to, and investigated by child welfare services in Canada. The CIS, Canada's only national child maltreatment study, is part of a surveillance program funded and directed by the Public Health Agency of Canada in collaboration with the provinces, territories and a team of researchers. The first CIS cycle was conducted in 1998, followed by the second cycle in 2003. This section provides an overview of the findings of the CIS-2003, and outlines the differences between CIS-1998 and CIS-2003.

The CIS-2003 collected data from a representative sample of 63 child welfare agencies across Canada. Child welfare workers completed a standardized data collection instrument on child maltreatment investigations during a three-month period from October to December, 2003¹⁷. The questionnaire gathered information on the age and sex of all children living in the home, the type, duration and severity of the child maltreatment, and contextual factors surrounding the maltreatment including family income, housing, an assessment of parent/caregiver stressors (i.e. alcohol abuse, limited social supports) and an assessment of the functioning of the maltreated child (i.e. depression, anxiety, developmental delay).

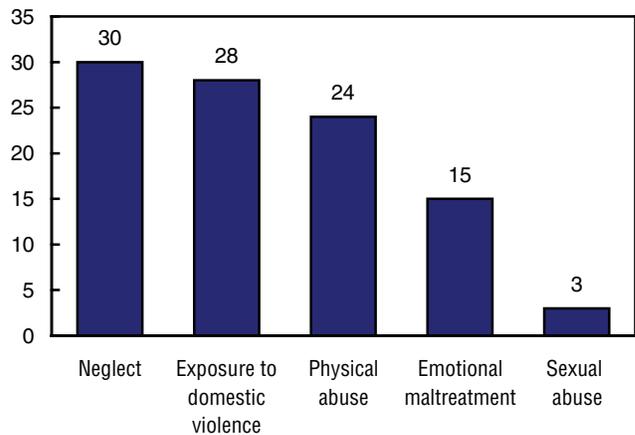
Data limitations of the CIS-2003

When interpreting the CIS-2003 results, the following caveats should be noted:

- The CIS is limited to reports of child abuse and neglect investigated by child welfare services and does not include reports that were screened out before an investigation was conducted. The data also do not include cases that were reported only to and investigated by police, or unreported cases of child abuse and neglect.
- The CIS measures the professional opinion of the child welfare worker, which may or may not be independently corroborated by other professionals.
- The CIS was not designed to conduct regional comparisons. Variations in rates across the country cannot be examined with the exception of those provinces and territories which were over sampled.
- The CIS data set does not contain comparable data for all variables from Quebec due to differences in data collection techniques. Eight agencies in Quebec were included on the basis of availability of data through the *Plate-forme informationnelle pour le bien-être de l'enfant* (PIBE) research database.

Figure 2.6
Primary categories of substantiated child maltreatment, 2003

Percentage of incidence



Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Excludes data from Quebec. Based on a sample of 5,660 substantiated child maltreatment investigations.

Source: Trocmé, N. et al. 2005. Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2003: Major Findings. Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Incidence of child maltreatment

The CIS-2003 study indicates that large numbers of children aged 0 to 15 years have been maltreated in Canada. An estimated 235,315 child maltreatment investigations were conducted in 2003 (38 investigations per 1,000 children)¹⁸. Almost half (49%) of these investigations were substantiated (approximately 19 substantiated investigations per 1,000 children). That is, upon investigation the child welfare worker considered that the evidence indicated that child abuse or neglect had taken place.

Neglect most common form of child abuse

Unlike the analysis of police-reported data that is based on a more narrow definition of child abuse, five maltreatment categories were captured in the CIS study including: emotional maltreatment, neglect, exposure to domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse. Among substantiated child maltreatment cases (excluding Quebec), neglect was the most common form of substantiated child abuse (30%), followed by exposure to domestic violence (28%), physical abuse (24%), emotional maltreatment (15%) and sexual abuse (3%) (Figure 2.6).

16. The findings in this section are based on a larger report: Trocmé, N. et al. 2005. *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2003: Major Findings*. Public Works and Government Services Canada.

17. In Quebec, the data on child maltreatment were obtained from an administrative information system and are not included in the analysis.

18. Calculations are based on the 2001 population estimates for children aged less than 1 year to 15 years.

Types of child maltreatment as measured through the CIS-2003

Physical abuse – The child has suffered or is at substantial risk of suffering physical harm at the hands of the child’s parent/caregiver. Physical abuse includes shaking, pushing, grabbing or throwing, hitting with a hand, punching, kicking or biting, hitting with an object, choking, strangling, stabbing, burning, shooting, poisoning, the abusive use of restraints or other forms of physical abuse.

Sexual abuse –The child has been, or is at substantial risk of being sexually molested or sexually exploited. Sexual abuse includes penetration, attempted penetration, oral sex, fondling, sex talk, voyeurism, exhibitionism, or exploitation.

Neglect – The child has suffered harm, or the child’s safety or development has been endangered as a result of the parent/caregivers’ failure to provide for or protect the child. Neglect includes failure to supervise resulting in either physical harm or sexual harm, physical neglect, medical neglect, failure to provide psychological or psychiatric treatment, permitting criminal behavior, abandonment or educational neglect.

Emotional maltreatment involves behaviours that damage a child psychologically, emotionally or developmentally. Emotional maltreatment includes emotional abuse, emotional neglect or exposure to non-intimate violence (i.e., between adults other than their caregiver).

Exposure to domestic violence occurs when a child has been a witness to violence occurring between parents/caregivers. This would include situations where the child indirectly witnessed the violence (e.g., saw physical injuries on the parent/caregiver the next day or overheard the violence).

Child characteristics

The incidence rate of substantiated child maltreatment cases was similar for both male (21.6 per 1,000 males) and female children (21.8 per 1,000 females). The type of maltreatment was also similar for boys and girls up to 7 years of age. After the age of 7, however, differences in patterns of maltreatment between boys and girls appear. The greatest proportion of boys abused was between the ages of 8 to 11, while for girls, the greatest proportion was between the ages of 12 and 15 years (Figure 2.7). Similar to trends found in police-reported data, the CIS results reveal that boys experienced more physical abuse, while girls experienced more sexual abuse.

In cases where physical abuse was the primary substantiated form of child maltreatment, 54% involved male children and 46% involved female children. Specifically, boys aged 8 to 11 years are at higher risk of physical abuse, as are girls 3 years of age and under, and girls aged 12 to 15 (Table 2.5).

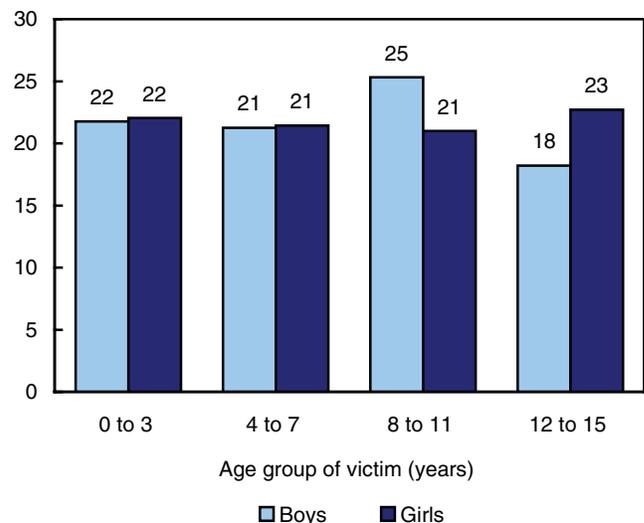
In cases where sexual abuse was the primary form of child maltreatment, 63% involved female children and 37% male children. The proportion of sexually abused males to females varies considerably by age group. Among substantiated cases of sexual abuse, young boys aged 4 to 7 years, and teenage girls aged 12 to 15 years were most vulnerable to sexual abuse (Table 2.5).

Gender differences were smaller in cases where neglect (48% females versus 52% males), emotional maltreatment (54% females versus 46% males) and exposure to domestic violence (48% females and 52% males) were reported as the primary forms of child maltreatment. For substantiated cases of neglect, very young boys (aged 0 to 3 years) and boys aged 8 to 11 were most likely to suffer from neglect. For girls, the highest proportion neglected were 7 years of age and younger, and girls aged 12 to 15 (Table 2.5).

According to the CIS-2003, children most vulnerable to emotional abuse were boys aged 8 to 11 years and girls 12 to 15 years of age. As for the risk of exposure to domestic violence, children of all ages were at equal risk, regardless of whether they were boys or girls (Table 2.5).

Figure 2.7
Incidents of child maltreatment by sex and age of victim, 2003

Incidence per 1,000 children



Notes: Excludes data from Quebec. Based on 5,660 substantiated child maltreatment investigations.

Source: Trocmé, N. et al. 2005. Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2003: Major Findings. Public Works and Government Services Canada.

19. Percentages do not add up to 100% due to multiple responses.

Child functioning concerns

Child welfare workers and researchers developed a checklist of 'child functioning' concerns or problems (including physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioural issues) that child welfare workers were likely to discover during the course of a child abuse investigation. In half of the substantiated cases of child abuse investigations, child functioning issues were confirmed either through a formal diagnosis or observation made by a child welfare worker, or disclosed by the parent or child.

Behavioural or emotional problems were the most commonly noted functioning problems of the substantiated child investigations (27%), followed by depression or anxiety (17%) and learning disabilities (15%). Negative peer involvement, Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and irregular school attendance were noted in 13% of the substantiated cases. The need for specialized education was noted in 12% of substantiated cases and violence toward others in 11% of substantiated cases. The remaining child functioning concerns were noted in less than 10% of the substantiated cases. While these types of concerns were identified at the time of the investigation by a child welfare worker, this may be an underestimate since some issues may only manifest themselves at a later date.

Child functioning concerns

Child welfare workers and researchers developed a checklist of concerns that they were likely to discover during the course of a child maltreatment investigation. A six-month period before the investigation was used as a reference point for noting the concern. The concerns fell into the following categories:

Emotional and cognitive functioning issues such as depression or anxiety, Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Hyperactivity Disorder, psychiatric disorder, learning disability, and/or the need for specialized educational services.

Behavioural functioning issues include negative peer involvement, alcohol abuse, drug/solvent abuse, self-harming behavior, violence towards others, running away from home, inappropriate sexual behavior, other emotional or behavioral problems, irregular school attendance or criminal involvement.

Physical functioning issues include developmental delay, physical disability, substance abuse-related birth defects, positive toxicology at birth, and other health conditions.

Parent/caregiver stressors

The CIS data collection form also included a checklist to assess the stressors of parents/caregivers that occurred during the previous six months. The checklist included: alcohol abuse, drug/solvent abuse, criminal activity, cognitive impairment, mental health issues, physical health issues, the lack of social supports, maltreatment as a child, victim of domestic violence, perpetrator of domestic violence and other functioning issues.

Household characteristics

Household characteristics provide important information concerning the context of child maltreatment. In almost half (48%) of the households of substantiated child maltreatment investigations, there were two caregivers. Of these, just under one-third (32%) of households had two biological parents, while 16% had one biological parent and a step-parent. In another 43% of substantiated maltreatment investigations, the child lived in a lone-parent family (39% female lone-parent, 4% male lone-parent), 5% involved households with other compositions, and 4% involved a biological parent living with another adult (e.g., child's grandparent, aunt, uncle) who also acted as a caregiver to the child. The mean age of caregivers was 26 years.

Most households identified full-time employment (57%) as the main source of income, another 24% reported receiving benefits, employment insurance or social assistance, 12% had either part-time, multiple or seasonal employment, and the source of household income was unknown for 7% of investigated children.

Family stressors and child maltreatment

In addition to assessing issues related to the functioning of the abused child, the CIS study collected information on potential family stressors experienced by one or both caregivers/parents. Among substantiated cases of maltreatment, at least one problem area was noted for 79% of female caregivers. The most commonly identified concerns for female parents included being a victim of domestic violence (51%), lack of social supports (40%), mental health issues (27%) and maltreatment as a child (25%).¹⁹

For male caregivers at least one concern was identified in 72% of substantiated child maltreatment investigations. The most frequently noted concerns for male caregivers included lack of social supports (33%), alcohol abuse (30%), mental health issues (18%), maltreatment as a child (18%), and drug or solvent abuse (17%).²⁰

Most child abuse is inflicted by a parent/caregiver

The CIS study found that most substantiated child maltreatment investigations involved allegations against parents, including biological mothers (54%), biological fathers (48%), stepfathers/common-law partners (12%) or stepmothers/common-law partners (2%)²¹ (Table 2.6). Relatives were the next most frequently identified perpetrators (6%). Only 3% of all cases of substantiated child maltreatment involved non-family perpetrators, and less than 1% of allegations involved a teacher or another professional working with the child.

19. Percentages may not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

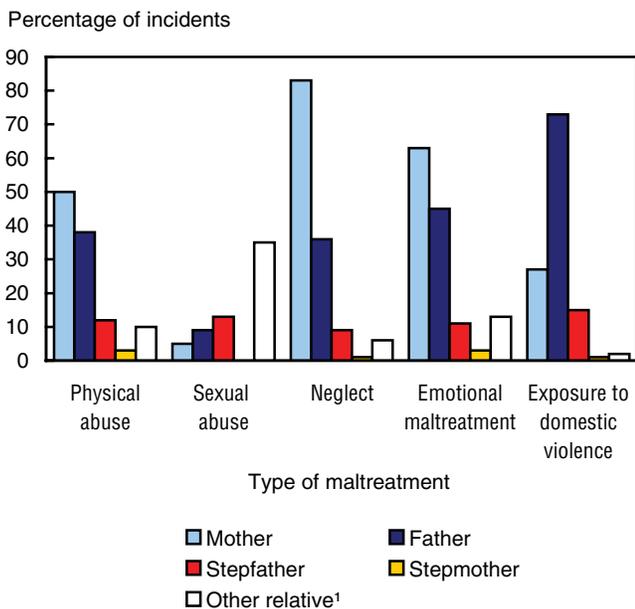
20. Percentages may not add to 100% due to multiple responses.

21. Percentages may not add to 100% as more than one perpetrator may have been involved in the maltreatment.

In substantiated cases of physical child abuse, the primary perpetrator was evenly split between mothers and fathers, with female parents being perpetrators in 53% of cases (50% biological mothers and 3% stepmothers) and male parents in 50% of cases (38% biological fathers and 12% stepfathers) (Figure 2.8 and Table 2.6). It is important to note that mothers may be over-represented since 30% of physical abuse victims were living in lone female-parent families. These findings are in contrast to police-reported data suggesting that fathers were the most commonly accused for family-related incidents involving physical abuse of children and youth²².

The alleged roles of mothers and fathers in two-parent families are somewhat different, with fathers being perpetrators of 67% of substantiated physical abuse, and mothers in 51% of cases.²³ In 4% of cases where physical abuse was the primary substantiated form of child abuse, other relatives were the alleged perpetrators. The boyfriends and girlfriends of parents were the non-familial figures most frequently reported as the perpetrators.

Figure 2.8
Identified perpetrator of child maltreatment, 2003



1. Includes any other relative, adult or child, such as grandparent, aunt/uncle and siblings, including adoptive parents and foster family.
Notes: Percentages may not add to 100% as maltreatment may have involved more than one perpetrator. Excludes data from Quebec. Based on a sample of 5,660 substantiated child maltreatment investigations with information about alleged perpetrators.
Source: Trocmé, N. et. al. 2005. Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2003: Major Findings. Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Non-parental relatives most likely to sexually abuse children

While police-reported data show that fathers were involved in over one-third of family-related sexual assaults on children and youth, the CIS study reports that non-parental relatives were most often the perpetrators. Non-parental relatives represented the largest group of perpetrators (35%) where sexual abuse was the primary form of substantiated child maltreatment (Table 2.6), followed by step-fathers (13%), biological fathers (9%) and biological mothers (5%).

These figures are an under-representation of child sexual abuse cases and should be interpreted with caution since they do not include cases of sexual abuse that are solely investigated by the police and as such, do not come to the attention of child protection workers. In addition, many cases of child sexual abuse go unreported.

Neglect is a primary concern

Biological mothers were considered to be perpetrators in 83% of cases where neglect was the primary form of substantiated child maltreatment. The over-representation of biological mothers should be interpreted with caution given that 42% of these substantiated neglect cases involved lone female-parent families. Biological fathers (36%) and stepfathers (9%) were considered to be perpetrators in 45% of cases of substantiated neglect.

Mothers and stepmothers were the alleged perpetrators in two-thirds (66%) of investigations where substantiated emotional abuse was the primary form of maltreatment, while biological fathers/stepfathers were the perpetrators in 56% of the cases (Table 2.6).

Biological fathers and stepfathers responsible for most exposure to domestic violence

Where exposure to domestic violence was the primary concern of substantiated maltreatment, biological fathers and stepfathers were considered to be responsible in 88% of these cases. In comparison, mothers/stepmothers were considered to have failed to protect their child(ren) from exposure to domestic violence in 28% of these cases (Table 2.6). The concept of ‘perpetrator’ should be interpreted with caution in cases of exposure to domestic violence. Child welfare investigations focus primarily on the question of the parent’s ability to protect a child from exposure to the violence rather than identifying the perpetrator of the violence.

22. Differences between the two sets of results may be because CIS results are based on proportions while police-reported data are based on rates.
 23. Percentages may not add to 100% due to multiple abusers where both parents may be involved in maltreating a child.

Variations in incidence rates between CIS-1998 and CIS-2003

The CIS study reveals that between 1998 and 2003, there has been an increase in both the number of child maltreatment investigations and the rate of substantiated child maltreatment. Police-reported data show only a slight increase in rates of family-related sexual assault (up 3%) and physical assault (up 5%) for both girls and boys during the same timeframe. In contrast, the CIS-2003 reports that the estimated rate of child abuse and maltreatment *investigations* increased 78% between 1998 and 2003 (from 22 to 38 per 1,000 children). The actual number of investigations into child maltreatment increased from 135,573 to 235,315 over the same period. Substantiated child maltreatment cases increased from 10 to 22 per 1,000 children between 1998 and 2003 (excluding Quebec). These increases may be attributed to a number of factors including changes in procedures and definitions between the two CIS cycles (for example, fewer cases were classified as suspected²⁴ in 2003), differences in case management practices (i.e., all children within a family were investigated), and an increase in awareness of child maltreatment which may result in increased reporting.

The increase in substantiated child maltreatment cases between 1998 and 2003 is primarily driven by two categories of child maltreatment: exposure to domestic violence (from 1.7 to 6.2 cases per 1,000 children) and emotional maltreatment (from 0.9 to 3.2 per 1,000 children). In 1998, these two forms of child maltreatment accounted for 27% of cases of substantiated maltreatment, by 2003 they accounted for 43%. The rates of child physical abuse and neglect increased to a lesser degree over the same time period. Physical abuse increased from 2.6 to 5.3 per 1,000 children and neglect increased from 3.6 to 6.4 per

1,000 children from 1998 to 2003. In contrast, cases of substantiated sexual abuse decreased by nearly one-third (30%), dropping from a rate of 0.9 to 0.6 per 1,000 children. However, this decrease is not statistically significant.

Planning for the third cycle of the CIS has begun. It is anticipated that data collection for the third cycle will start in the fall of 2008. These data will provide the opportunity to study trends of child abuse investigations and substantiated cases at three points in time over a 15-year period. This information can be used to inform child welfare program and policy planning, and ultimately to assist children who experience abuse and neglect.

Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2003

The CIS-2003 used a modified version of the CIS-1998 instrument to document the nature of maltreatment, key child and family characteristics and post-investigation services. Data was collected directly from investigating social workers (except Quebec where administrative data were used).

A stratified cluster design was used to select maltreatment investigations for the CIS-2003. A total of 11,562 child investigations were conducted by 936 child welfare workers in 55 sites across Canada and 2,638 child investigations from 8 sites in Quebec. Weights were applied to the sample to produce an estimate of 217,319 (excluding Quebec) and 235,315 (including Quebec) child maltreatment investigations.

24. Suspected cases of child maltreatment are those which had insufficient evidence to substantiate the case, but where maltreatment could not be ruled out. Suspected cases dropped from 24% to 13% between 1998 and 2003.

Table 2.1
Victims of physical and sexual assault by age group, reported to a subset of police departments, 2004^{1,2,3,4}

Type of assault	Total victims		Adult victims (18+)		Child and youth victims (under 18)		Child and youth victims by age group					
							< 3		3-11		12-17	
	no.	rate	no.	rate	no.	rate	no.	rate	no.	rate	no.	rate
Assault – Total	127,942	662	95,949	631	31,993	775	735	126	8,526	419	22,732	1,504
Sexual assault – Total	13,506	70	5,240	34	8,266	200	180	31	3,436	169	4,650	308
Aggravated sexual assault (level 3)	110	1	86	1	24	1	1	0	6	0	17	1
Sexual assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2)	224	1	169	1	55	1	1	0	14	1	40	3
Sexual assault (level 1)	11,599	60	4,739	31	6,860	166	136	23	2,714	133	4,010	265
Other sexual crimes ⁵	1,573	8	246	2	1,327	32	42	7	702	35	583	39
Physical assault – Total	114,436	592	90,709	597	23,727	574	555	95	5,090	250	18,082	1,196
Aggravated assault (level 3)	1,300	7	1,122	7	178	4	23	4	12	1	143	9
Assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2)	25,040	130	20,199	133	4,841	117	112	19	905	44	3,824	253
Common assault (level 1)	82,031	424	63,627	418	18,404	446	389	67	4,088	201	13,927	921
Unlawfully causing bodily harm	562	3	458	3	104	3	10	2	22	1	72	5
Discharge firearm with intent	52	0	43	0	9	0	1	0	0	0	8	1
Assault against peace/public officer	4,214	22	4,213	28	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Criminal negligence causing bodily harm	142	1	105	1	37	1	9	2	9	0	19	1
Other assaults	1,095	6	942	6	153	4	11	2	54	3	88	6

0 true zero or value rounded to zero
 1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.
 2. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 119 police departments active as of December 31, 2004 (excluding partial year respondents) representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.
 3. Children and youth include all those under the age of 18.
 4. Rate per 100,000 population for the geographic areas policed by the UCR2 respondents, based on populations provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada.
 5. Other sexual crimes include such offences as sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, anal intercourse and bestiality.
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 2.2
Child and youth victims of physical and sexual assault by sex of victim and relationship to accused, reported to a subset of police departments, 2004^{1,2,3,4}

Relationship of accused to victim	Total assault						Sexual assault ⁵						Physical assault ⁶					
	Total		Sex of victim				Total		Sex of victim				Total		Sex of victim			
			Female	Male	Female	Male			Female	Male	Female	Male						
	no.	rate	no.	rate	no.	rate	no.	rate	no.	rate	no.	rate	no.	rate	no.	rate		
Total	31,993	775	15,622	774	16,371	775	8,266	178	6,606	327	1,660	79	23,727	510	9,016	447	14,711	696
Family ⁷	8,092	196	4,891	242	3,201	152	2,832	61	2,223	110	609	29	5,260	113	2,668	132	2,592	123
Friend/ acquaintance ⁸	15,537	376	7,427	368	8,110	384	3,692	79	2,944	146	748	35	11,845	255	4,483	222	7,362	349
Stranger	4,976	120	1,861	92	3,115	147	949	20	832	41	117	6	4,027	87	1,029	51	2,998	142
Unknown ⁹	3,388	82	1,443	72	1,945	92	793	17	607	30	186	9	2,595	56	836	41	1,759	83

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.
 2. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 119 police departments active as of December 31, 2004 (excluding partial year respondents) representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.
 3. Children and youth include all those under the age of 18.
 4. Rate per 100,000 population for the geographic areas policed by the UCR2 respondents, based on populations provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada.
 5. Sexual assault includes sexual assault (level 1), sexual assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), aggravated sexual assault (level 3) and the "other sexual crimes" category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc.
 6. Physical assault includes common assault (level 1), assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), aggravated assault (level 3), unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.
 7. Includes spouse, ex-spouse, parent, sibling, and extended family.
 8. Includes any relationship in which the accused and the victim are familiar with each other, but are not related.
 9. Includes cases where the relationship between the victim and the accused is unknown.
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 2.3

Child and youth victims of physical and sexual assault by age group of victim and relationship to accused, reported to a subset of police departments, 2004^{1,2,3,4}

Relationship of accused to victim	Total assault								
	Total	Age of victim							
		Less than 3	3 to 5	6 to 8	9 to 11	12 to 14	15 to 17		
	number	rate			rate				
Total	31,993	775	126	273	383	578	1,371	1,642	
Family ⁵	8,092	196	80	156	186	181	266	272	
Friend/acquaintance ⁶	15,537	378	27	79	134	264	755	841	
Stranger	4,976	120	6	11	27	73	210	342	
Unknown ⁷	3,388	82	13	27	36	61	139	187	
Relationship of accused to victim	Sexual assault ⁸								
	Total	Age of victim							
		Less than 3	3 to 5	6 to 8	9 to 11	12 to 14	15 to 17		
	number	rate			rate				
Total	8,266	200	31	157	175	173	339	275	
Family ⁵	2,832	69	18	80	84	74	92	54	
Friend/acquaintance ⁶	3,692	89	11	55	66	66	170	140	
Stranger	949	23	0	6	9	19	44	49	
Unknown ⁷	793	19	2	16	16	13	33	31	
Relationship of accused to victim	Physical assault ⁹								
	Total	Age of victim							
		Less than 3	3 to 5	6 to 8	9 to 11	12 to 14	15 to 17		
	number	rate			rate				
Total	23,727	574	95	115	208	405	1,031	1,367	
Family ⁵	5,260	127	62	75	102	106	174	218	
Friend/acquaintance ⁶	11,845	287	16	24	67	198	585	701	
Stranger	4,027	97	6	5	18	54	166	292	
Unknown ⁷	2,595	63	11	11	21	47	106	156	

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.

2. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 119 police departments active as of December 31, 2004 (excluding partial year respondents) representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.

3. Children and youth include all those under the age of 18.

4. Rate per 100,000 population for the geographic areas policed by the UCR2 respondents, based on populations provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada.

5. Includes spouse, ex-spouse, parent, child, sibling, and extended family.

6. Includes any relationship in which the accused and the victim are familiar with each other, but are not related.

7. Includes cases where the relationship between the victim and the accused is unknown.

8. Sexual assault includes sexual assault (level 1), sexual assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), aggravated sexual assault (level 3) and the "other sexual crimes" category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc.

9. Physical assault includes common assault (level 1), assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), aggravated assault (level 3), unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 2.4

Age of victim and type of assault against children and youth by family members, reported to a subset of police departments, 2004^{1,2,3,4}

Relationship of accused to victim	Total assault							
	Total	Age group of victims						15 to 17
		Less than 3	3 to 5	6 to 8	9 to 11	12 to 14		
	number	rate			rate			
Total	8,092	196	80	156	186	181	266	272
Parent ⁵	4,902	119	66	103	115	111	165	136
Sibling ⁶	1,759	43	8	28	41	42	62	64
Extended family ⁷	1,163	28	6	25	30	28	37	38
Spouse/ex-spouse ⁸	268	6	0	0	0	0	2	34
	Sexual assault ⁹							
Relationship of accused to victim	Total	Age group of victims						15 to 17
		Less than 3	3 to 5	6 to 8	9 to 11	12 to 14		
		number	rate			rate		
Total	2,832	69	18	80	84	74	92	54
Parent ⁵	1,200	29	11	39	28	26	41	27
Sibling ⁶	850	21	4	21	32	27	26	11
Extended family ⁷	762	18	3	20	24	22	24	15
Spouse/ex-spouse ⁸	20	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
	Physical assault ¹⁰							
Relationship of accused to victim	Total	Age group of victims						15 to 17
		Less than 3	3 to 5	6 to 8	9 to 11	12 to 14		
		number	rate			rate		
Total	5,260	127	62	75	102	106	174	218
Parent ⁵	3,702	90	55	64	87	85	124	109
Sibling ⁶	909	22	3	7	9	15	36	54
Extended family ⁷	401	10	3	4	6	6	13	23
Spouse/ex-spouse ⁸	248	6	0	0	0	0	1	32

0 true zero or value rounded to zero

1. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown.

2. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 119 police departments active as of December 31, 2004 (excluding partial year respondents) representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.

3. Children and youth include all those under the age of 18.

4. Rate per 100,000 population for the geographic areas policed by the UCR2 respondents, based on populations provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada.

5. Includes the natural mother or father of the victim, or the legal guardian with legal custody and care of the child (i.e., foster parent, step-parent, adoptive parents). This category includes a small number of victims under 18 years of age where the relationship of the accused to the victim was miscoded as "child" and should have been coded as "parent."

6. Sibling includes natural, step, half, foster or adopted siblings.

7. Extended family includes others related by blood, marriage, adoption or foster care.

8. Spouses/ex-spouses include legally married, common-law, separated and divorced partners. Rates are calculated per 100,000 population for the geographic areas policed by the UCR2 respondents rather than by marital status as population counts by marital status are not available for this geographic level.

9. Sexual assault includes sexual assault (level 1), sexual assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), aggravated sexual assault (level 3) and the "other sexual crimes" category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc.

10. Physical assault includes common assault (level 1), assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2), aggravated assault (level 3), unlawfully causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, criminal negligence causing bodily harm and other assaults.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 2.5
Age and sex of victim by type of substantiated child maltreatment, 2003

Primary type of maltreatment	Boys										Girls									
	Age of victim (in years)										Age of victim (in years)									
	0 to 3		4 to 7		8 to 11		12 to 15		Total		0 to 3		4 to 7		8 to 11		12 to 15		Total	
Total incidence	11,589	12,810	1,650	11,865	52,764	11,219	12,242	13,019	14,051	50,531										
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Physical abuse ¹	962	43	2,978	57	5,531	64	4,224	46	13,695	54	1,293	57	2,257	43	3,137	36	4,874	54	11,561	46
Sexual abuse ²	100	47	395	53	367	38	213	21	1,075	37	115	53	345	47	595	62	804	79	1,859	63
Neglect ³	4,313	58	3,339	46	4,568	55	3,516	48	15,736	52	3,167	42	3,950	54	3,662	45	3,851	52	14,630	48
Emotional abuse ⁴	1,550	44	1,572	44	2,194	53	1,791	43	7,107	46	1,974	56	1,975	56	1,977	47	2,336	57	8,262	54
Exposure to domestic violence ⁵	4,664	50	4,526	55	3,840	51	2,121	49	15,151	52	4,670	50	3,715	45	3,648	49	2,186	51	14,219	48

- Physical abuse involves deliberate application of unreasonable force to any part of a child's body.
- Sexual abuse involves using a child for sexual gratification, exposure of a child to sexual contact, activity or behaviour.
- Neglect occurs when a child's parent/caregiver fails to provide the physical or psychological necessities of life.
- Emotional abuse involves behaviours that damage a child psychologically, emotionally or developmentally.
- Exposure to domestic violence occurs when a child has been a witness to violence occurring between parents/caregivers.

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Excludes data from Quebec.

Based on a sample of 5,660 substantiated child maltreatment investigations with information about child age and sex.

Source: Trocmé, N. et. al. 2005. Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2003: Major Findings. Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Table 2.6
Alleged family-related perpetrators of child maltreatment by type of abuse, 2003

Alleged family-related perpetrator	Total	Type of child maltreatment											
		Physical abuse		Sexual abuse		Neglect		Emotional abuse		Exposure to domestic violence			
Total incidence	126,873	28,551	1,804	41,096	20,716	34,706							
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	
Mother ¹	55,601	54	12,524	50	147	5	25,313	83	9,713	63	7,904	27	
Father ²	49,351	48	9,581	38	260	9	11,051	36	6,985	45	21,474	73	
Stepfather ³	12,281	12	3,142	12	385	13	2,633	9	1,681	11	4,440	15	
Stepmother ⁴	1,978	2	747	3	0	0	401	1	456	3	374	1	
Foster family ⁵	1,230	1	541	2	0	0	281	1	254	2	154	1	
Other relative ⁶	6,432	6	2,016	8	1,012	35	1,417	5	1,627	11	360	1	

0 true zero or value rounded to zero

1. Mother refers to the biological mother of the child.

2. Father refers to the biological father of the child.

3. Stepfather also includes the common-law partner of the child's biological mother.

4. Stepmother also includes the common-law partner of the child's biological father.

5. Includes members of a foster family or adoptive family.

6. Other relatives include any other relative adult or child, such as grandparent, aunt/uncle or siblings.

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% as maltreatment may have involved more than one perpetrator.

Excludes data from Quebec.

Based on a sample of 5,660 substantiated child maltreatment investigations with information about alleged perpetrators.

Source: Trocmé, N. et. al. 2005. Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, 2003: Major Findings. Public Works and Government Services Canada.

3.0 Family violence against older adults

by Maire Gannon

According to recent population projections, the population of seniors¹, those aged 65 years and over, will continue to grow at a faster pace than other segments of the Canadian population. In fact, seniors are expected to exceed the population of persons under 15 years of age by 2015 (Bélanger et. al., 2005). This would mark the first time in Canadian history that the senior population would outnumber children under the age of 15.

Low fertility rates, an increase in life expectancy and ageing baby boomers (people born between 1946 and 1965) will all contribute to the expected doubling of the proportion of seniors over the next 25 years. By 2031, persons aged 65 years and older are forecasted to account for between 23% and 25% of the Canadian population, up from 13% in 2005. This large and rapid projected increase will follow the slow but steady growth in the elderly population that has occurred over the last few decades (an increase of five percentage points since 1971).

These shifts in population have sparked further consideration of the socio-economic issues affecting the oldest segments of the Canadian population. While the financial situation of seniors has improved since the 1980s (Gannon et. al, 2005), seniors still have higher levels of physical and mental vulnerability and dependency than younger adults. This is particularly true of those aged 85 years and older, whose percentage of the population has more than doubled over the last three decades. Meeting the demands of this growing population often falls on relatives, thus placing an increasing number of seniors at possible risk of family violence.

Family violence against seniors can take many forms, including emotional/psychological abuse, neglect/maltreatment, material exploitation/financial abuse, physical assault and sexual assault.² Attempts to explain elder abuse have often pointed to the stressful nature of the caregiving role, which can involve balancing different and conflicting roles and responsibilities including helping elderly relatives, raising children, working at paid employment and maintaining personal relationships (Hogstel & Curry, 1999). This caregiver stress model, however, has been criticized for its inability to explain the absence of abuse in most caregiving relationships (Anetzberger, 2000). It has also been suggested that relying solely on the caregiver explanation could be viewed as victim blaming or legitimizing the perpetrators' behaviour (Brandl, 2000).

Other explanations on the causes for elder abuse look to the perpetrators' characteristics and their interactions with the victim, the perpetrators' resource dependency on the victim, learned abusive behaviour, ageist societal attitudes and the continuation of spousal abuse into old age (Wolf, 2000; Dumont-Smith, 2002; Anetzberger, 2000; Dessin, 2000; Wilke & Vinton, 2003; Lachs and Pillemer, 2004).

This chapter examines the prevalence and nature of family violence against seniors, as well as changes in this type of violence over time. There are two main surveys in Canada that measure the extent and characteristics of violence against older adults: the General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization and the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey. Both surveys capture data on violence that would constitute a criminal offence according to the Canadian Criminal Code. Neither survey, however, permits analysis of emotional or psychological abuse perpetrated against seniors. As well, despite the surveys' abilities to estimate the extent of senior violence, both self-reported victimization surveys and police-reported surveys may underestimate violence against seniors. For example, telephone-based victimization surveys are unable to reach the most vulnerable seniors who may not have access to a phone, those who have cognitive impairment or disability, those living in an institution such as a nursing home, and those who are ill or isolated. Police-reported surveys are limited to recording only violence against seniors that are reported to, or come to the attention of police.

In order to monitor changes in the prevalence of senior violence, it is possible to compare results from the 1999 and 2004 GSS victimization cycles, as well as to examine trends in police-reported rates using the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Trend Database. This latter database is a subset of the Incident-based UCR survey and contains data for 69 police departments that have consistently reported to the UCR2 between 1998 and 2004.

1. In this analysis, the terms 'seniors', 'elderly persons' and 'older adults' are used interchangeably and refer to persons aged 65 years and older.
2. Researchers have recently noted 'self-neglect' as a form of abuse (Thompson and Priest, 2005). As the name would suggest, there are no perpetrators involved in these abuse cases.

3.1 Self-reported victimization data

Seniors have lowest risk of victimization

According to the 2004 GSS, 10% of seniors self-reported being a victim of crime in the previous 12 months, of which 1% reported being a victim of violent crime (including being robbed, physically or sexually assaulted). This is about the same as the proportion recorded in 1999, the last time the survey was conducted.

When examining the rates of self-reported violent incidents, it is apparent that seniors have the lowest risk of victimization. There were approximately 12 violent incidents for every 1,000 persons aged 65 years and over, almost four times lower than the violent victimization rate recorded for individuals aged 55 to 64, and five times lower than persons aged 45 to 54.

Elderly women do not appear to be at increased risk of violent victimization. In 2004, the violent victimization rates against elderly women reflected the overall rate for senior violence. That is, there was no statistically significant difference in the risk of senior women compared to the risk of seniors in general. The numbers were too small to permit analysis of violence against male elderly victims.

Most senior victims report knowing the perpetrator

Seniors are more likely than other victims to know their aggressor. In eight in ten violent incidents involving a lone accused (82%), the senior victim stated that they knew the perpetrator as a spouse, other family member, friend or acquaintance. In comparison, 69% of persons under the age of 65 knew the accused.

About sixty percent of violent incidents against seniors do not involve the use or presence of a weapon^{3,4}

The use of a weapon and level of injury can be indicators for the severity of a violent incident. In 2004, 59% of self-reported violent incidents against older adults did not involve the use or presence of a weapon. This is lower than the proportion recorded for incidents involving victims under 65 years of age (69%).

Although seniors, on average, tend to be more frail and vulnerable than their younger counterparts, there was no difference in the likelihood of injuries. For both seniors

and younger victims, injuries were relatively infrequent. Over two-thirds (68%) of senior victims did not sustain any physical injuries, compared to 73% of victims under 65 years of age.

Almost half of violent incidents against seniors go unreported

There are a number of reasons why victims choose not to report criminal incidents to police. These reasons can be similar for victims of all ages, including the belief that the offence was not important enough, dealing with the victimization in another way, feeling that they didn't want the police involved, or believing that the violence was a personal matter. More specific to seniors, their possible physical or mental impairment, as well as fears of negative reprisal from the aggressor, such as threats of being abandoned in an institution, could prevent seniors from reporting abuse.

Despite these possible concerns, abuse against seniors is less likely to go unreported than violence committed against younger persons. The 2004 GSS data revealed that 49% of violent incidents against seniors did not come to the attention of police, compared to 66% of violent incidents against persons under 65 years of age.

Violent victimization rates lower among multigenerational families

Researchers have noted that the "sandwich generation", defined as those caring for both their children and their elderly parents, may experience increased risk of stress. This can be further compounded when the elderly parent and caregiver share a home (Butler, 1999; Lachs and Pillemer, 2004). Using the 2004 GSS, it is possible to examine rates of violent victimization in multigenerational households. Results show that the overall violent victimization rate for people residing in multigenerational households with children under 15 years and seniors was three times lower (45 incidents per 1,000 population) than the rate for households with children and no seniors (135 per 1,000 population). This suggests that having seniors in the home may act as a protective factor against overall violent victimization. For example, younger segments of the senior population often play an active role in the daily running of the home, as opposed to a dependency role.

3. Excludes incidents of spousal physical and sexual assault.

4. The numbers were too small to permit analysis by family and non-family violence.

Fear of crime among seniors

Previous studies on fear of crime have suggested that personal characteristics, such as age and sex, can have a significant impact on an individual's perception that they will become a victim of crime (Weinrath & Gartrell, 1996). These variations in fear are based on perceived physical or social vulnerability rather than on actual risk.

Using the 2004 General Social Survey, it is possible to look at differences in fear of crime among various segments of the population. This survey focuses on general feelings of safety, as opposed to individuals' fear of particular types of crime, such as violence by a family member.

The 2004 GSS suggests that while seniors were less likely than non-seniors to state that they were satisfied with their overall feelings of personal safety, they had similar or lower levels of fear when asked about their anticipated fear or worry in three specific situations¹. For example, among seniors who take public transit alone at night, 36% indicated that they were somewhat or very worried when they engaged in this activity. This compares to 43% of persons aged 45 to 64, and 44% for the youngest age group, those aged 15 to 24.

Results also show that the sex of the older adult can play a role in levels of fear. In general, women's concerns about becoming a victim are higher than those of men. However, fear among women decreases with advancing age, while the opposite was true for men (Gannon, 2005). Almost nine in ten senior women (87%) felt safe walking alone in their neighbourhood after dark, higher than the proportion of women aged 15 to 24 (79%). Comparatively speaking, 91% of older men (aged 65 and over), versus 94% of young men (aged 15 to 24) felt safe walking alone after dark.

1. The three fear situations include walking alone at night in their neighbourhood, waiting or taking public transit alone at night, and being home alone at night.

Source: Gannon, M. General Social Survey on Victimization, Cycle 18: An Overview of Findings, 2004. Catalogue no. 85-565. Ottawa: Statistics Canada.
Weinrath, M. and J. Gartrell. 1996. "Victimization and fear of crime" *Violence and Victims*. 11: 187-197.

3.2 Police-reported violence against seniors

Police-reported violence lowest among seniors

Consistent with the findings from the 2004 GSS, police-reported data from a subset of 119 police services (representing 53% of the national volume of crime) show that seniors have the lowest risk of being a victim of a violent crime. In 2004, there were 3,755 police-recorded incidents of violence against seniors, or a rate of 151 incidents per 100,000 seniors. This was about half the rate recorded for persons aged 55 to 64 (366 per 100,000), and almost 14 times lower than the rate recorded for the highest-risk age category, people aged 18 to 24 years (2,106 per 100,000) (Figure 3.1). In total, seniors represented 2% of all victims of violent offences.

Seven in ten police-reported senior violent crimes committed by a non-family member

Police-reported data indicate that most seniors (71%) fall victim to crime at the hands of persons outside the family.⁵ While this was the case for both male and female senior victims, the likelihood that the perpetrator was a family member was higher when the senior victim was a woman. In 2004, over one-third (39%) of female senior victims were victimized by a relative, compared to 21% of male senior victims.

The family violence perpetrator also varied by the sex of the senior victim. Female senior victims were slightly more likely to be victimized by their current or previous spouse (36%) than by their adult children (34%) (Table 3.1; Figure 3.2). In contrast, male senior victims were more likely to be victimized by their adult children (38%), while a smaller proportion was victimized by a spouse (22%).

Not surprisingly, the relationship between the victim and the accused varied by age of the senior. As senior women grow older, current and previous spouses represented a smaller proportion of family-related abusers. Specifically, 39% of female victims aged 65 to 74 were victimized by their spouses, compared to 32% of female victims aged 75 and over. This may simply indicate that female victims are outliving their abusive spouses, or that the abusive spouses are no longer physically capable of violence. For senior male victims, the proportion enduring spousal violence decreased slightly with increased age of the victim.

Among non-family violence cases, strangers were the most common perpetrators of senior violence (51%), followed by friends and acquaintances (40%). A small proportion of senior victims of non-family related violence were attacked by a business partner (9%) perhaps because many Canadians 65 years of age and older are retired or no longer working.

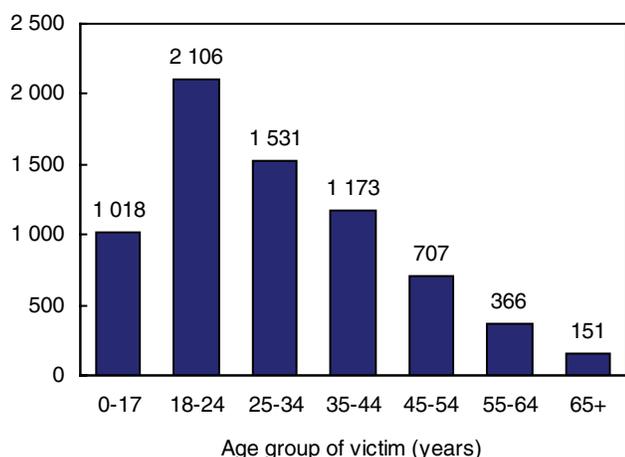
Senior women experience higher rates of family-inflicted abuse

Rates of overall violent crime were 1.5 times higher among senior men than senior women (168 per 100,000 versus 111 per 100,000). However, senior women were at slightly greater risk of family violence. The rate of reported family violence against senior women was 43 per 100,000, 20% higher than the rate for senior men (35 per 100,000). This gender difference in the risk of family violence, however, was less pronounced in comparison to younger persons. That is, women under the age of 65 had a risk of family violence that was double to five times the risk to men.

5. Includes only those incidents where police-reported information on the victim-accused relationship was available.

Figure 3.1
Seniors have lowest rates of police-reported violence, 2004

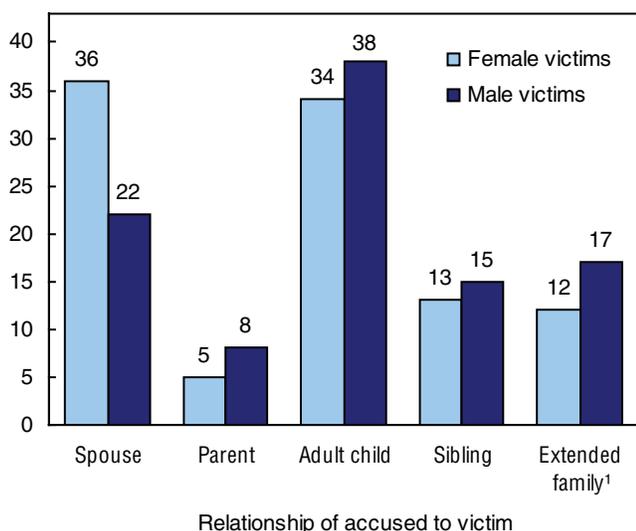
Rate per 100,000 population



Notes: Data are not nationally representative. Based on a subset of 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004. Includes violence committed by family and non-family members.
Source: Statistics Canada, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2), 2004.

Figure 3.2
Older women as likely to be victimized by spouses or adult children, 2004

Percentage of victims



¹ Includes aunts, uncles, cousins, sisters/brothers-in-law, etc.
Note: Data are not national representative. Based on a subset of 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.
Source: Statistics Canada, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2), 2004.

Older seniors experience lower rates of police-reported violence

The rate of police-reported violence committed by family and non-family members declines as the age of seniors increases. In particular, the youngest group of seniors (those aged 65 to 74 years) experienced 48 family violence incidents per 100,000 population. This rate decreases to 34 per 100,000 for seniors aged 75 to 84, and a rate of 16 per 100,000 for those 85 years and older. The hidden nature of elder abuse may be one explanation for this apparent drop with advanced age. Researchers have noted that the oldest seniors (those 85 years and older) are more likely than younger seniors to experience dementia or other chronic illnesses (Welfel et. al., 2000). These conditions can make it physically or mentally impossible to report violence to police. In fact, some researchers have suggested that these types of vulnerabilities, coupled with the need for greater care, places the oldest seniors at greatest risk of maltreatment and abuse (Wolf, 1997).

Other explanations for the decline in violent crime rates as the age increases could be related to an actual decrease in violent crime as opposed to simply the inability to report abuse. The oldest adults may be less likely to be exposed to violence outside the home because of the reduced mobility and frequency of outside activities. Also, since a proportion of senior violence is perpetrated by spouses, violence could be decreasing because of illness or death of the abusive senior spouse.

Senior victims most likely to experience common assault

Common assault (level 1 assault) was the most prevalent offence perpetrated against elderly victims, regardless of whether or not the perpetrator was a family member (36%) (Table 3.2).⁶ However, there were some notable differences between family and non-family violence in the type and frequency of offences. First, common assaults occurred more frequently among senior victims of family-related violence than among seniors victimized by non-family members (45% versus 30%). Second, robberies, while relatively uncommon among family violence cases (2%), occurred against one in four senior victims of non-family violence (26%). Third, elderly victims of family violence were more likely than seniors victimized by non-family members to sustain serious forms of assaults (levels 2 and 3) (16% versus 10%).

It is also noteworthy that although both female and male elderly victims suffered common assaults more often than any other offence, there was one exception. For non-family related violence, female seniors were more likely to be a victim of robbery than of common assault (37% and 24%).

⁶ Excludes incidents where the sex and relationship of the victim to the accused was unknown..

Over half of senior victims sustained no physical injuries

As indicated in previous chapters, violent crime does not necessarily result in physical injury to the victim. In fact, over half of older victims of family violence (52%) and non-family violence (59%) did not experience any type of injury (Table 3.3).⁷ When a physical injury was sustained, it was more often minor physical injuries that required no professional medical treatment or only some first-aid (33% for family violence and 29% for non-family violence). In all, 3% of older victims experienced major physical injuries, similar to the proportion for victims aged 18 to 64 (2%). There was very little difference in injury levels between male and female senior victims of family violence.

Injuries occurred at about the same frequency among both family-related senior abuse and family-related child abuse (39% and 38%).

One in five injured senior victims were harmed by a weapon

Weapons are rarely used to cause injury to senior victims. Among seniors who were injured by a family member, just over three-quarters were harmed through physical force, which is similar to family violence against other age groups, as well as non-family violence against seniors. A similar proportion of children and youth (77%) were harmed through physical force by a family member. One in five injured seniors was victimized with a weapon (Table 3.4). Clubs and other blunt instruments were used against 4% of injured senior victims, knives and other cutting /piercing instruments were used against 4%, and 'other' weapons, such as vehicles and pepper spray were used against 10% of injured senior victims.

Senior female victims were equally as likely as older male victims to be injured through physical force (76% each), whereas older male victims were slightly more likely to be injured by knives and clubs or blunt instruments (11% versus 7%). No gender difference existed in the use of 'other' types of weapons (10% each).

Men are perpetrators in most family violence incidents against seniors⁸

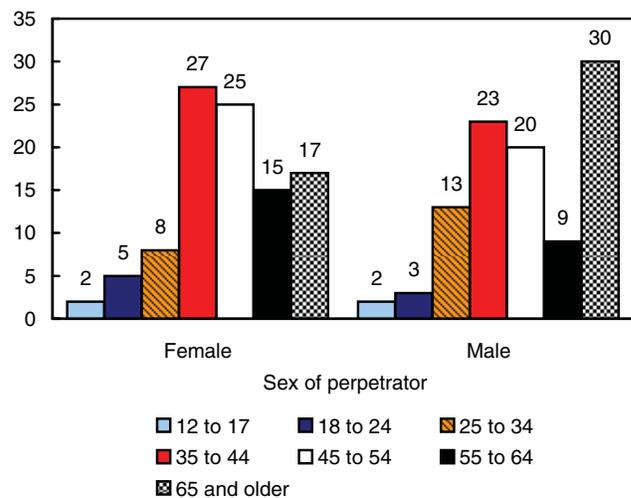
Family members accused of violence against the elderly tend to be men (79%). This holds true despite the fact that women are more likely to be the informal caregivers of seniors (Frederick and Fast, 1999). On the other hand, male perpetrators were often 65 years or older (30%), reflecting the finding that a significant proportion of senior violence was spousal violence (Figure 3.3). In comparison, 17% of female perpetrators were seniors.

Those aged 35 to 54 years, who were frequently the adult children of seniors, also figured prominently as accused. Over half of female perpetrators (52%) were between 35 and 54 years of age, while 43% of male perpetrators were in this same age group.

Of females committing elder abuse, 76% physically assaulted their elderly family member. This included common assault (48%), assault with a weapon (27%) and aggravated assault (1%). No females were accused of sexual assault against an elderly family member. In comparison, 62% of male aggressors physically assaulted their elderly family member and another 1% committed sexual assault. Uttering threats was almost twice as common among male perpetrators than female aggressors (22% versus 12%), while criminal harassment occurred at about the same frequency for both female and male perpetrators (6% each).

Figure 3.3
Nearly one in three male family violence perpetrators are 65 years and over, 2004

Percentage of accused by age group



Note: Data are not nationally representative. Based on a subset of 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.
Source: Statistics Canada, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2), 2004.

7. Excludes incidents where the sex and relationship was unknown.
 8. Includes incidents with a single victim and single accused.

Police-reported violence against senior family members continues downward trend

Based on the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Trend Database, which represents 37% of the national volume of crime in 2004, the rate of family violence against seniors remained unchanged in 2004 at 41 incidents per 100,000. However, the rate is 8% lower than the peak of 45 per 100,000 recorded in 2000.

While there was no change in family-related violence against seniors, the rate of non-family senior violence increased for the first time since 2000. The 2004 rate of 102 per 100,000 population was 3% higher than the rate in 2003, but was still lower (-4%) than the rate of 106 recorded in 2000.

The gender difference in the prevalence of family-related elder abuse has held steady for the past five years. In 2004, the rate of violence against elderly women (44 per 100,000) was 22% higher than the rate for elderly males (36), similar to the difference reported in 2000 (46 versus 38).

Table 3.1
Number and proportion of older adult victims of violent crime by sex and relationship to accused, reported to a subset of police departments, 2004

Relationship of accused to victim	Total		Sex of victim			
			Female		Male	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Total violence against older adults	3,370	100	1,586	100	1,784	100
Total family	986	100	617	100	369	100
Spouse	248	25	180	29	68	18
Ex-spouse	58	6	45	7	13	4
Parent	59	6	29	5	30	8
Child	350	35	208	34	142	38
Sibling	133	13	79	13	54	15
Extended family ¹	138	14	76	12	62	17
Total non-family	2,384	100	969	100	1,415	100
Friend or acquaintance	952	40	365	38	587	41
Business relationship	224	9	65	7	159	11
Criminal relationship	2	0	0	0	2	0
Stranger	1,206	51	539	56	667	47

0 true zero or value rounded to zero

1. Extended family includes aunts, uncles, cousins, sisters/brothers-in-law, parents-in-law etc.

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Excludes incidents where the victim's sex and/or victim's age and/or relationship of the accused to the victim was unknown.

Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.

Includes family violence and non-family violence against victims aged 65 years and older.

Source: Statistics Canada, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 3.2
Number and proportion of older adult victims of violent crime by offence type and relationship to accused, reported to a subset of police departments, 2004

Offence type	Violent offences committed by family members						Violent offences committed by non-family members					
	Total		Sex of victim				Total		Sex of victim			
			Female	Male		Female			Male			
no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	
Homicide/attempt	20	2	14	2	6	2	13	1	3	0	10	1
Sexual assault (levels 1, 2, 3)	8	1	8	1	0	0	57	2	54	6	3	0
Major assault (levels 2 and 3)	155	16	77	12	78	21	235	10	63	7	172	12
Common assault (level 1)	444	45	296	48	148	40	716	30	234	24	482	34
Robbery	15	2	9	1	6	2	608	26	355	37	253	18
Criminal harassment	63	6	40	6	23	6	123	5	62	6	61	4
Uttering threats	241	24	149	24	92	25	460	19	133	14	327	23
Other violent offences ¹	40	4	24	4	16	4	172	7	65	7	107	8
Total	986	100	617	100	369	100	2,384	100	969	100	1,415	100

0 true zero or value rounded to zero

1. Other violent offences include unlawfully causing bodily harm, criminal negligence causing bodily harm, other assaults, kidnapping, extortion, hostage-taking, explosives causing death/bodily harm, arson, and other violent violations.

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown.

Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.

Includes family violence and non-family violence against victims aged 65 years and older.

Source: Statistics Canada, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 3.3
Level of injury by sex and relationship of older adult victim, 2004

Level of injury	Violent offences committed by family members						Violent offences committed by non-family members					
	Total		Sex of victim				Total		Sex of victim			
			Female		Male				Female		Male	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Unknown	99	10	61	10	38	10	216	9	90	9	126	9
No injuries ¹	517	52	329	53	188	51	1,397	59	564	58	833	59
Minor physical injuries	328	33	201	33	127	34	698	29	287	30	411	29
Major physical injuries	27	3	13	2	14	4	59	2	22	2	37	3
Death	15	2	13	2	2	1	14	1	6	1	8	1
Total	986	100	617	100	369	100	2,384	100	969	100	1,415	100

0 true zero or value rounded to zero

1. No visible injuries were noted at the time of the incident, or the violation did not involve the use of weapons or physical force against the victim.

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown.

Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.

Includes family violence and non-family violence against victims aged 65 years and older.

Source: Statistics Canada, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Table 3.4
Method of violence causing most serious injury to the victim in family violence incidents against older adults (aged 65 years and older), reported to a subset of police departments, 2004

Method of violence	Total		Sex of victim			
			Female		Male	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Total	370	100	227	100	143	100
Unknown or no weapon ¹	17	5	14	6	3	2
Physical Force	281	76	172	76	109	76
Weapon	72	19	41	18	31	22
Firearms	2	1	2	1	0	0
Knife/other piercing instrument	16	4	7	3	9	6
Club/blunt instrument	16	4	9	4	7	5
Other weapon ²	38	10	23	10	15	10

0 true zero or value rounded to zero

1. The weapon was not known or no weapon was involved in the incident.

2. Other weapon includes explosives, fire, motor vehicle or any device used to poison.

Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown.

Excludes incidents where no injuries were reported.

Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 119 police departments representing 53% of the national volume of crime in 2004.

Includes family violence and non-family violence against victims aged 65 years and older.

Source: Statistics Canada, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, 2004.

4.0 Family homicides

Using data from the Homicide Survey, the following chapter examines the different circumstances and characteristics of family-related homicides in Canada between 1995 and 2004. The analysis includes details about spousal homicides, family-related homicides against children and youth and family-related homicides against older adults (65 years and older). This chapter presents data on the characteristics of the incidents, the accused persons and the victims of these homicides.

Between 1995 and 2004, family-related homicides accounted for one-third (37% or 1,667) of the 4,502 solved homicides.¹ Of these family-related homicides, nearly half (47%) were spousal homicides, of which 4 out of 5 were committed by a current or former husband against his wife. One-quarter (26%) of family-related homicides were committed against children and youth (0 to 17 years), usually by the victim's mother or father, and 9% were against older adults (65 years and older) most of whom were killed by their adult son.

4.1 Spousal homicides²

by *Melanie Kowalski*

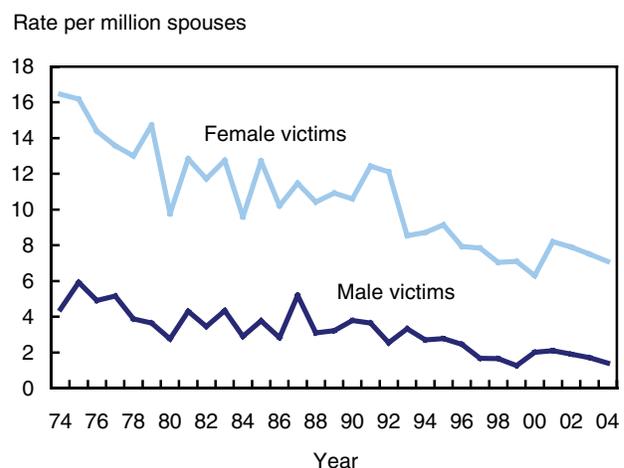
Prevalence of spousal homicide

Spousal homicides involve persons in legal marriages, those who are separated or divorced from such unions and those in common-law relationships (including same-sex spouses). In 2004, there were 74 spousal homicides, down 4 from the previous year and slightly lower than the 10-year average of 79 (from 1994 to 2003). This figure represents an overall rate of 4.3 spousal homicides per one million spouses in 2004³, the third consecutive annual decline in the spousal homicide rate⁴. Spousal homicides account for approximately 16% of all solved homicides and almost half of all family homicides in Canada (47%) (Table 4.1).

Although the rate of spousal homicides has fluctuated from year-to-year, there has been an overall decline for both male and female victims over the last 30 years (Figure 4.1, Table 4.2). From 1974 to 2004, the rate for female victims of spousal homicide dropped 57% from 16.5 per million women in spousal relationships to 7.1, while the rate for male victims dropped 68% from 4.4 to 1.4. Possible explanations for this decrease in spousal homicide rates, particularly among female victims, include increased gender

equality, changes in police and court policies towards spousal violence and an increase in services for persons experiencing family violence such as specialized domestic violence courts and emergency shelters for abused women (Dawson, 2001; Pottie Bunge, 2002). In addition, public awareness and policy responses to spousal violence have intensified over the years including the implementation of criminal procedures and protocols to better respond to this type of violence.

Figure 4.1
Spousal homicide rates declining, 1974 to 2004



Notes: Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated and divorced spouses, 15 years of age and over, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada. Spousal homicides reported by police include a small number of victims who were separated from a common-law relationship. As population estimates are unavailable for this sub-population, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

- Solved homicides refer to those where at least one accused has been identified by police.
- Throughout this section, all calculations exclude "unknown" counts.
- A small number of spousal homicides involving victims who were separated from a common-law relationship have been included in the calculation of the overall spousal homicide rates. However, currently there are no reliable Census estimates for this sub-population and consequently, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.
- The spousal homicide rate dropped 16% between 2001 and 2004.

Women have consistently been more likely than men to be killed by their spouse. The rate of spousal homicide against females has been 3 to 5 times higher than the rate for males. Between 1995 and 2004, 39% of all homicides committed against females were perpetrated by a spouse, compared to 5% of spousal homicides committed against males.

Provincial variations in spousal homicide

Similar to overall homicide and violent crime rates in Canada, spousal homicide rates tend to be lower in the eastern provinces than in the western provinces. When looking at the 10-year time period from 1995 to 2004, spousal homicide rates were lowest in the Atlantic provinces (with a combined average of 3.3 per million spouses). Ontario and Quebec reported comparable rates of spousal homicide during the same time period (4.0 and 4.6 respectively). Rates in the four western provinces were higher than all other provinces, with Saskatchewan reporting the highest average rate at 8.4 spousal homicides per million spouses followed by its neighbouring provinces of Manitoba and Alberta (6.1 each), and British Columbia at 5.2 (Table 4.3).

Spousal homicide rates in the three Territories (with a combined average of 39.7 homicides per million spouses) were considerably higher than the provinces between 1995 and 2004. Among the Territories, Nunavut (59.0) had the highest spousal homicide rate followed by the Yukon (37.0) and the Northwest Territories (31.7). It should be noted that although rates of spousal homicide are higher in the territories compared to the provinces, the actual number of spousal homicides is very low. On average, there were 2 spousal homicides per year in the three Territories combined during this 10-year time period (Table 4.3).

Risk factors⁵

Common-law and separated spouses are at greatest risk of spousal homicide

According to the findings from the Homicide Survey from 1995 and 2004, spouses in a common-law relationship accounted for a larger proportion of all spousal homicide victims than married, separated or divorced persons. Nearly forty percent (39%) of all spousal homicides involved victims in common-law relationships⁶. A high incidence of spousal homicides among common-law couples may be attributed to socio-economic factors such as being young, being unemployed and having lower levels of commitment to the relationship (Johnson and Hotton, 2003, Mihorean, 2005). Another 35% of spousal homicides were perpetrated by married persons, while just under one-quarter involved separated persons (23%) and the remaining 2% were divorced persons.

Although legally married persons represented a large proportion of spousal homicides (35%), they account for an even larger proportion of people in spousal relationships.

According to the Census of Population of Canada, three-quarters of all adults, aged 15 years and over, in a spousal relationship in Canada were legally married (75%) during this 10-year period, 1995 to 2004⁷. In comparison, common-law spouses and those separated from a spouse were over-represented as victims of spousal homicide relative to their size in the population. During this same ten-year time period, 14% of Canadians were living in a common-law relationship, yet accounted for 39% of all spousal homicide victims. Separated persons accounted for 4% of the Canadian population and 23% of all spousal homicide victims, and divorced persons represented 8% of the general population while accounting for 2% of spousal homicide victims.

Young persons at highest risk of spousal homicide

Research has consistently shown that rates of spousal victimization are highest among those who are young (Pottie Bunge and Locke, 2000, Mihorean, 2005). Between 1995 and 2004, homicide data reveal that this is the case for both male and female victims of spousal homicide. The rate of spousal homicide was significantly higher for young adults 15 to 24 years of age compared to older age groups, especially for female victims. During the most recent 10-year period, the homicide rate for these young wives was the highest of all female victims, and 3 times higher than the overall rate for all female victims of spousal homicide (7.1). While the spousal homicide rate for young male spouses (15 to 24 years of age) was lower than that of their female counterparts, their risk was more than 5 times the rate of all male spouses (7.5 versus 1.4 per million male spouses) (Figure 4.2).

Over half of all young people aged 15 to 24 who were killed by their spouse were in a common-law relationship (56%) compared to 37% among victims of spousal homicide who are 25 years of age and older. It may be that the high incidence of spousal homicide among common-law couples is driven by two factors: the over-representation of younger people in these relationships; and, that young people have the highest rates of both victimization and offending.

Persons accused of spousal homicide less likely to be employed

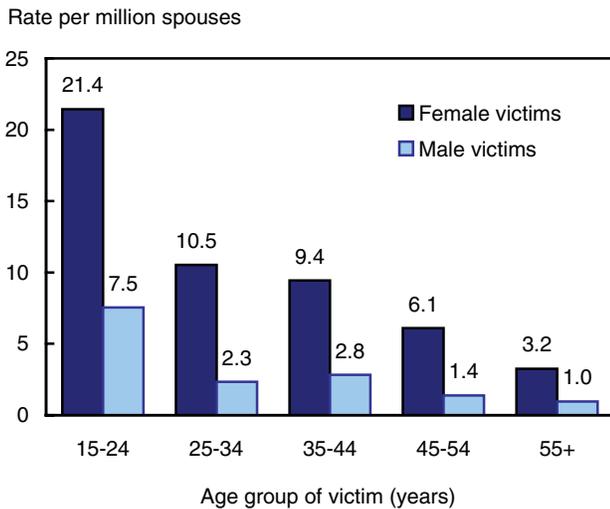
Research supports the finding that domestic violence is likely to escalate in stressful situations (Corrections Canada, 1995). Both low income and violence limits a woman's independence and makes it difficult for her to leave an abusive partner upon whom she may be economically

5. Analysis is based on homicides for which there was a single accused and a single victim. Percentages are derived from a subset of incidents representing 96% of the total number of spousal homicides between 1995 and 2004.

6. Includes 6 same-sex spousal homicides.

7. Spousal homicide rates by all types of spousal relationships were not calculated, as the population estimates by spousal relationship were not fully consistent with relationship types reported by police.

Figure 4.2
Young females most at risk of spousal homicide, 1995 to 2004



Notes: Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated and divorced spouses, 15 years of age and over, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada. Spousal homicides reported by police include a small number of victims who were separated from a common-law relationship. As population estimates are unavailable for this sub-population, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

dependent (Office for the Prevention of Family Violence in Alberta, 1994). Data from the Homicide Survey reveal that both accused and victims of spousal homicides were less likely to be employed relative to married persons in the general population⁸.

For spousal victims, employment rate disparity was greatest among those between 25 and 44 years of age. For example, between 1995 and 2004, one-third (33%) of married female spousal victims aged 25 to 44 were employed at the time of their death, compared to nearly three-quarters (74%) of married females in the same age group in the general population.

Males accused of spousal homicide were also less likely to be employed. Approximately two-thirds (67%) of males accused of spousal homicide between 25 and 44 years of age were employed, while the vast majority (90%) of married men in the same age group within the general population were employed.

Alcohol and drug use common in spousal homicides

Consumption of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicants are known to play a role in the commission of many crimes including homicide (Parker and Auerhahn, 1999). Although alcohol does not have a direct causal effect on crime, it is known to be associated with existing factors such as an aggressive personality and a pre-disposition to use violence

(Sumner and Parker, 1995). Data from the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) also lend support to this assertion. According to results from the 2004 GSS, 44% of women and 24% of men who had been victimized by their current or previous partner reported that their partner had been drinking at the time of the incident (Mihorean, 2005).

Data from the Homicide Survey reveal that between 1995 and 2004, the majority of persons accused of committing spousal homicide (62%) or non-spousal homicide (65%) had consumed alcohol and/or drugs at the time of the incident. Alcohol and/or drug use was particularly prevalent when the spousal homicide stemmed from an argument between the victim and the accused. Of those spousal homicides that resulted from an argument, 78% of accused persons and 72% of victims had used drugs and/or alcohol. In contrast, a large proportion of victims (46%) were not under the influence of either alcohol or drugs at the time of the incident.

History of family violence

As part of the Homicide Survey, police are asked to indicate whether there had been a history or pattern of violence among family members prior to the spousal homicide. It is important to note that the survey does not identify the perpetrator of the previous violent incidents, only that a history or pattern of violence existed between the victim and the accused.

Between 1961 and 1991, the Homicide Survey remained virtually unchanged. In an effort to respond to changing information needs, the survey was revised and expanded in 1991 and, then again, in 1997. As such, there is some information which is not available historically (e.g. criminal history of the victim and accused, mental illness of the accused, offences associated with the homicide, Shaken Baby Syndrome as a cause of death and concealment as a motive).

Information on persons accused of homicide are only available for solved incidents (i.e. where an accused person has been identified by police). Among incidents involving multiple accused persons, only the relationship between the victim and the closest accused is recorded on the Homicide Survey database. Analyses pertaining to the characteristics of accused persons (e.g. age of accused, criminal history of accused and mental disorder of accused) are based upon a subset of the total number of homicides consisting of those incidents that were committed by a single accused person. The analysis of history of family violence is based upon a subset of the total number of homicides consisting of those incidents involving a single victim and a single accused person. Further, all information that has been reported to the Homicide Survey as unknown by police has been excluded from the analyses.

8. Employment data for the Canadian population are based on estimates from the Labour Force Survey.

Between 1995 and 2004, two-thirds (65%) of spousal homicides involved a history of domestic violence. Females accused of spousal homicide were more likely than male accused to have experienced a history of family violence (71% versus 63%). This pattern held true for all marital relationships with the exception of separated spouses, where female and male accused were equally likely to have had a history of family violence (73% versus 74%). Among homicides involving common-law spouses, police reported a history of family violence for 60% of female accused, nearly double the proportion for male accused (37%).

Criminal history

In addition to a history of domestic violence, over half (54%) of those accused in spousal homicides between 1997 and 2004 had a previous criminal conviction⁹. In contrast, 67% of those accused of non-spousal homicides had a previous criminal conviction. The majority of previous convictions were of a violent nature such as robbery (6%), homicide (2%) or other violent offences (55%)¹⁰. A further 23% of persons accused of spousal homicide had a prior conviction for other *Criminal Code* or other federal or provincial violations, 11% for a property offence and 3% for a drug conviction. These findings were similar for both males and females accused of committing spousal homicide.

Approximately one-quarter of victims (27%) of spousal homicide, compared to 47% of victims of non-spousal homicide had at least one prior conviction. Male spousal victims were more likely than female victims to have had a prior criminal conviction (68% versus 17%). This finding can be attributed to the over-representation of males in criminal activities.

One in seven accused had a mental disorder

Beginning in 1997, the Homicide Survey asked police to indicate whether the accused was suspected of having a mental or developmental disorder such as schizophrenia, dementia or developmental delays. It should be noted that this information is determined by police and is not necessarily supported by a medical or a health professional assessment. Between 1997 and 2004, one in seven, or 14% of the accused in spousal homicides were suspected of having a mental or developmental disorder. A larger proportion of males accused of spousal homicide were suspected of having a mental disorder compared to female accused (16% versus 6%). In contrast, 17% of the accused of all homicides were suspected of having a mental disorder, of which female accused were more often suspected than were male accused (30% versus 19%).

Characteristics of spousal homicides

Escalation of an argument the most common motive

The most common motive recorded by police for killing a spouse is the escalation of an argument (41%), followed by frustration (22%) and jealousy (21%). Other motives

reported by police included financial gain (4%), revenge (3%) and personal protection (1%). Police reported no apparent motive in 5% of spousal homicides.

Motives related to spousal homicides differed for female and male victims. Spousal homicides against males were more likely to stem from an argument or quarrel (64%), whereas homicides against female spouses were more likely to have resulted from jealousy (25%) or frustration (24%) on the part of the accused.

Precipitating crimes led to spousal homicides

Spousal homicides can sometimes be the culmination of another offence. In the case of spousal homicide, about one-quarter (24%) of incidents can be characterized as precipitating from another offence. It is also evident that precipitating crimes occurred more frequently in spousal homicides involving female victims than for male victims (26% versus 19%).

The majority of precipitating crimes involved physical assault (51%), followed by criminal harassment (12%), other violent crimes (10%) and arson (7%). While a larger proportion of physical assaults were committed against male victims of spousal homicide compared to female victims (78% versus 46%), all precipitating incidents of sexual assault, criminal harassment, kidnapping, break and enter or other property crimes that lead to homicide were perpetrated against female victims.

Most female spouses killed by stabbing or shooting; most male spouses killed by stabbing

Over the past decade, the most common methods used in spousal homicides were stabbings (38%) and shootings (28%). Methods used to kill spouses differed for male and female victims (Table 4.4). Between 1995 and 2004, the most common method used to kill male spouses was by stabbing (66%), followed by shooting (16%).

In contrast, female victims of spousal homicide were equally likely to be stabbed or shot (31% each), followed by strangulation (20%). A somewhat larger proportion of female spousal victims were killed as a result of physical force such as a beating, strangulation, suffocation or drowning compared to males (18% of female victims versus 14% of male victims).

Use of firearms in spousal homicides decreasing

As with other types of homicides, the use of firearms during the commission of spousal homicides has been decreasing.

9. In 1997, the Homicide Survey began collecting information on the criminal history of victims and accused persons. While it is possible for a person to have more than one prior conviction, police are asked only to indicate the most serious.

10. The accused had a prior conviction for a violent offence other than homicide or robbery (i.e., attempted murder, sexual assault, assault or criminal negligence causing death/bodily harm).

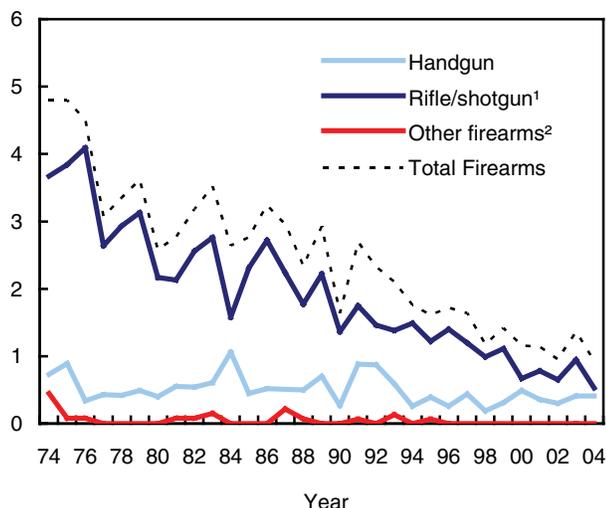
Between 1995 and 2004, there was a 36% decrease in the use of firearms in the commission of spousal homicides (from 25 to 16). In 1995, 2.7 wives per million spouses were murdered with a firearm compared to 1.7 in 2004, a decrease of 37%. Similarly, the rate at which husbands were murdered with a firearm over the same time period decreased from 0.5 husbands per million spouses to 0.1, a decrease of 80%.

During this period, rifles and shotguns accounted for 62% of all firearm-related spousal homicides, followed by handguns (28%), sawed-off rifles/shotguns (10%) and other firearms (1%)¹¹. As in previous years, most firearms used to commit spousal homicides were not registered (82%), and the accused persons were not licensed firearm users (66%)¹².

While rifles and handguns continue to be the most common type of firearm used against spousal victims, the extent of their use has declined substantially over the years. Over the 10-year period, the rate of rifles and shotguns used to commit spousal homicide decreased 58%, while the rate of handguns decreased 5% (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3
Rate of firearm spousal homicides, 1974 to 2004

Rate per million



1. Includes sawed-off rifles/shotguns.

2. Includes fully automatic firearms, firearm like weapons (e.g. nail gun, pellet gun) and unknown types of firearms.

Notes: The information is not intended to imply a causal relationship between gun-control legislation and homicide rates. Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated and divorced spouses, 15 years of age and over, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Accused male spouses more likely to commit suicide

Between 1995 and 2004, one-quarter of all spousal homicides resulted in the accused committing suicide. The likelihood that a homicide will result in the accused committing suicide is greater among spousal homicides (25%) than other family homicides (20%) and non-family-related homicides (4%). This observation supports the research that homicide-suicides are more common in cases where there are close ties between victims and accused (Gillespie, Hearn and Silverman, 1998).

Previous research suggests that men are much more likely than women to take their own lives after killing a spouse (Rosenbaum, 1990). Results from the Homicide Survey support this assertion. Over the past 10 years, 31% of males committed suicide after killing their spouse, compared to 3% of females accused of killing their spouse. This finding is similar to that for suicide rates among the general population which show that males are almost 4 times more likely than females to commit suicide.

As previously indicated, over the past 10 years, the most common motive reported for spousal homicides was the escalation of an argument. However, when the accused person committed suicide, the incident was more likely to have resulted from the accused person's feelings of frustration and despair (37% of all spousal homicide-suicides).

Mental illness such as schizophrenia, dementia and developmental delays are often reported among persons who commit spousal homicide-suicide. Since 1997, police reported the presence of a mental disorder among one-quarter (26%) of all persons accused of spousal homicide-suicide compared to 12% of spousal homicides that were cleared by charge or cleared otherwise.

Multiple victims typically children

The vast majority of spousal homicide incidents involve only one victim. However, between 1995 and 2004, when multiple victims were involved in spousal homicides (7%), it was typically the perpetrators own children who were also killed (63%)¹³. Other victims included extended family members (15%), acquaintances (15%) and strangers (7%).

Among many homicide incidents where the spouse and other victims were killed, the perpetrator committed suicide. Between 1995 and 2004, a total of 71% of spousal homicide incidents that involved multiple victims culminated in the suicide of the accused, the vast majority of whom were male (95%). (For further discussion on family-related homicide-suicides see Aston and Pottie Bunge, 2005.)

11. Other firearms include fully automatic firearms, firearm-like weapons (e.g. nail gun, pellet gun) and unknown type of firearm.

12. The firearm registration variable of the Homicide survey contains a high proportion of unknowns.

13. Includes biological, adopted, step and foster children.

First-degree murder most common charge for killing wife; second-degree murder for killing husband

Possible charges that police can lay in incidents of spousal homicide include first-degree murder, second-degree murder or manslaughter¹⁴ (See textbox for definitions). Between 1995 and 2004, nearly three-quarters (72%) of persons accused of killing their spouse were charged by police¹⁵. The remaining 27% of accused committed suicide or were not charged for other reasons (e.g. death by natural causes). Among those persons who were charged, half (50%) were charged with second-degree murder, 43% with first-degree murder and the remaining 7% for manslaughter.

Over the last decade, criminal charges differed for men and women accused of spousal homicide. Men who killed their spouse were twice as likely as women to be charged with first-degree murder (49% versus 25%). In contrast, women accused of killing their spouse were more likely to be charged with second-degree murder (64% versus 45%).

In addition, criminal charges for spousal homicides differed based on the nature of the spousal relationship. Between 1995 and 2004, persons accused of killing their legally married husband or wife were equally likely to be charged with first-degree murder (48%) as they were for second-degree murder (46%). However, homicides committed by separated or divorced spouses were most likely to result in a charge of first-degree murder (64%); conversely, common-law spouses who killed their partners were most likely to be charged with second-degree murder (61%)¹⁶.

14. Charge data represent charges laid or recommend by police at the time of the initial homicide investigation and do not necessarily reflect revisions following court appearances or convictions.

15. Includes charges laid or recommended by police.

16. Homicides involving common-law spouses include same-sex spouses.

Definition of homicide

Homicide Survey

In 1961, the Homicide Survey began collecting police-reported data on all homicide incidents, victims and accused persons in Canada. There are four types of *Criminal Code* offences that are associated with homicide: 1st degree murder, 2nd degree murder, manslaughter and infanticide.

Murder

A murder occurs when a person intentionally, by a wilful act or omission, causes the death of another human being, or means to cause bodily harm that the person knows is likely to cause death.

First degree murder occurs when:

- (a) it is planned and deliberate; or
- (b) the victim is a person employed and acting in the course of his/her work for the preservation and maintenance of the public peace (e.g. police officer, correctional worker); or
- (c) the death is caused by a person committing or attempting to commit certain serious offences (e.g. criminal harassment, kidnapping, hijacking, sexual assault, robbery and arson).

Second degree murder is all murder that is not first degree.

Manslaughter

Manslaughter is culpable homicide that is not murder or infanticide.

Infanticide

Infanticide occurs when a female wilfully causes the death of her newly-born child (under one year of age), if her mind is considered disturbed from the effects of giving birth or from lactation.

The role of intimacy: how the victim-accused relationship affects court outcomes in cases of spousal homicide

Recent changes to policies and programs to better recognize the differences between family and non-family violence may be playing a part in the way the court system has been using charging and prosecution practices in Canada. A recent report from the Department of Justice Canada explores whether intimate partner homicides¹⁷ are treated differently than non-intimate partner homicides¹⁸ within the court system and, if so, has this treatment varied over time (Dawson, 2004). Dawson examined the court outcomes for intimate and non-intimate partner homicides in Toronto over a period of almost 30 years: 1974 to 2002.

Similar to results from a recent study that found variations in sentencing outcomes between family and non-family violence cases (Gannon, 2004), Dawson found that perpetrators who killed intimate partners were treated differently in the courts than those who killed persons with whom they shared a more distant relationship. When examining court outcomes of intimate versus non-intimate partner homicides Dawson observed changes over the last three decades. The study showed that persons accused of killing intimate partners received lighter sanctions during the earlier period 1974 to 1983, but that this effect diminished between 1984 and 1996. Compared to the earlier period, persons accused of intimate partner homicide were more likely to be convicted, more likely to be convicted of murder (as opposed to manslaughter), and more likely to be sentenced to a federal prison. During the later years, homicide cases involving intimates did not appear to be treated any differently than cases involving those who shared more distant relationships.

Dawson concluded that changes have occurred in the way intimate partner homicide is treated within the courts, and that these changes appear to parallel the increasing awareness of, and concern about intimate partner violence as a serious social issue.

17. Intimate partner homicide is defined as those killings that occurred between current or former legal spouses, common-law partners or dating couples.

18. Non-intimate partner homicides are killings that occurred between family members (not including spouses), friends, acquaintances or strangers.

Source: Dawson, Myrna. 2004. "Criminal Justice Outcomes in Intimate and Non-intimate Partner Homicide Cases". Catalogue number rr04-6e. Research and Statistics Division. Ottawa: Department of Justice Canada.

4.2 Family-related homicides against children and youth

by Mia Dauvergne

In 2004, police across Canada reported a total of 55 homicides committed against children and youth under the age of 18 years (30 males and 25 females). This was the third

consecutive year that child and youth homicides decreased, and is the lowest number since this information began to be recorded in 1974.¹⁹ Despite this historic low, homicides against children and youth represented almost one out of every ten homicides in Canada (9%).

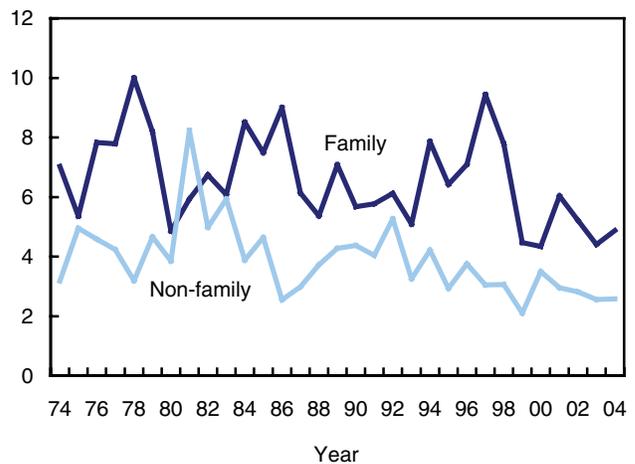
As in previous years, most homicides against children and youth in 2004 were committed by family members (34 or 62%). Another 15 young victims were killed by non-family members (including acquaintances, friends, or criminal associates), three were killed by strangers and another three remain unsolved.

The rate of family-related homicides against children and youth has fluctuated over the past three decades with little discernible trend (Figure 4.4). Between 2003 and 2004, the rate increased by 10% (3 additional homicides), although it remained below 5 per million children and youth for only the fifth time in 30 years. Other than in 1981, the family-related homicide rate against children and youth has been consistently higher than the homicide rate by non-family members for the past three decades.

It is important to note that the number of child and youth homicides may be under-reported since some deaths that are actually due to intentional injury may be misclassified as resulting from a natural or undetermined cause.

Figure 4.4
Rates of family homicides against children and youth higher than non-family homicides, 1974 to 2004

Rate per million population (0 to 17 years)



Note: Rates are calculated per million children and youth (0 to 17 year olds) using population estimates provided by Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

19. Incidents of manslaughter and infanticide were not recorded on the Homicide database prior to 1974.

Parents responsible for the vast majority of family-related homicides against children and youth

Historical data consistently show parents to be the primary perpetrators of family-related homicides against children and youth. In 2004, 85% of victims aged 0 to 17 years (29 victims) who were killed by a family member were murdered by their parent, the same percentage that was reported during the period from 1974 to 2003.

Fathers are more likely than mothers to be accused of killing their own children, although the difference is negligible when the child is an infant (Figure 4.5). Between 1995 and 2004, 59% of all children killed by a family member were murdered by their father²⁰ and 32% were killed by their mother. The remaining 9% of child victims were killed either by siblings, grandparents, cousins or other extended family members who were related to the child by blood, marriage or adoption. The proportion of homicides committed by non-parental family members was much higher among adolescent youth aged 12 to 17 years than it was for child victims aged 0 to 11 years.

The past decade has seen an increase in the proportion of step-parents accused of killing a child or youth family member. Between 1995 and 2004, step-fathers and step-mothers represented 14% of all parents who killed their child. This figure compares to 6% during the previous two decades. This increase may be partly due to an increase in the number of step-families in recent years. According to data collected from the 2001 Census (the latest year for which these figures are available), between 1995 and 2001, the number of step-families in Canada increased by 17% (Statistics Canada, 2002a).

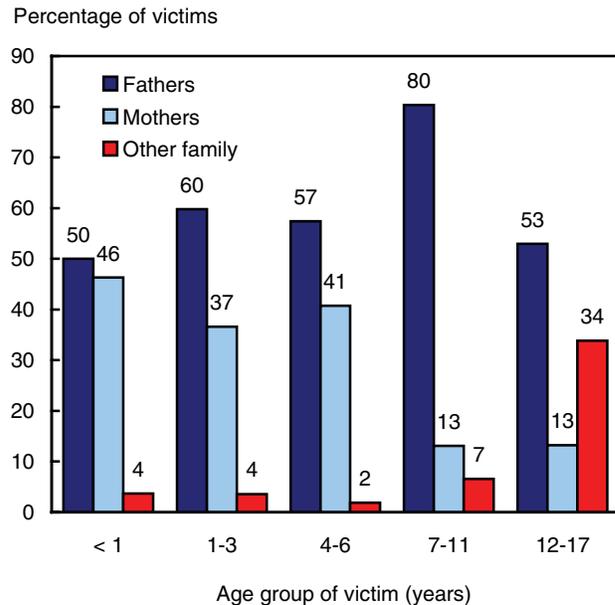
Young parents over-represented as accused

Young parents tend to be disproportionately represented among those accused of killing their child. Despite representing only 2% of all parents (Statistics Canada, 2002b), over the past decade, young parents (aged 15 to 24 years) were responsible for 60% of homicides against children less than one year of age, and 12% of homicides against older children (1 to 17 years of age). Lack of parenting skills, financial insecurity and lower levels of educational achievement may contribute to younger parents' inability to adequately cope with the pressures of parenting.

Family-related homicide rates highest among infants

As has been the case every year since 1974, infants (less than 1 year of age) continue to be at far greater risk of homicide by a family member compared to older children and youth (Figure 4.6). When looking at the most recent 10-year period from 1995 to 2004, more than one-quarter of all child and youth family-related homicide victims were infants (27%).

Figure 4.5
Fathers responsible for the majority of family homicides against children and youth, 1995 to 2004



Notes: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Based upon a subset consisting of those victims who were killed by one person, representing 94% of the total number of family-related homicides against children and youth from 1995 to 2004.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

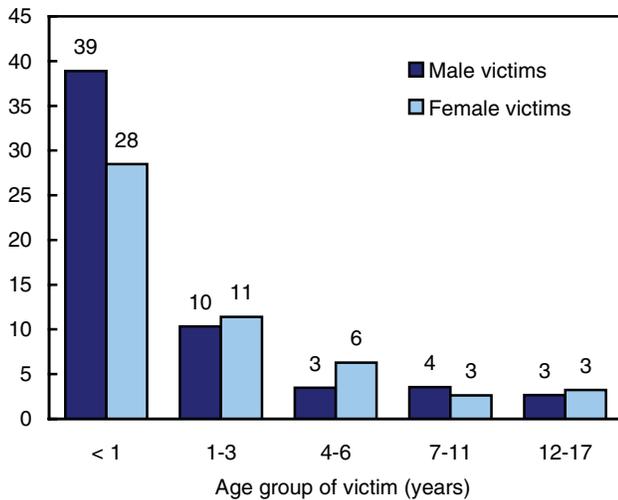
Despite annual fluctuations, baby boys tend to be at greater risk for family-related homicide than baby girls. From 1995 to 2004, an average of 39 per million male infants were killed by a family member compared to 28 per million female infants.

Once children reach their first birthday, homicide rates for male and female children become relatively similar and, as children continue to age, their risk of becoming a victim of a family-related homicide decreases. Between 1995 and 2004, the rate for 1 to 3 year olds (11 per million) was three times lower than the rate for infants (34 per million), and the rate for teenage youth being killed by a family member was 11 times lower (3 per million 12 to 17 year olds) (Figure 4.6). Youth aged 12 to 17 years were more likely to be killed by someone outside the family (67%) such as casual acquaintances or strangers.

20. Fathers and mothers include biological, step, adoptive and foster parents.

Figure 4.6
Infants have the highest rate of homicide committed by a family member, 1995 to 2004

Rate per million (0 to 17 years)



Note: Rates are calculated per million children and youth (0 to 17 year olds) according to the applicable age group and sex category using population estimates provided by Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Young children more often killed by physical force, whereas older children more often killed with weapons

The methods used by family members to kill children and youth tend to differ depending upon the age of the victim (Table 4.5). Between 1995 and 2004, younger victims (0 to 6 years of age) were most often killed by methods involving physical force such as strangulation (27%), beating (26%) and Shaken Baby Syndrome (15%).²¹

Conversely, family members who killed older children and youth (7 to 17 years) were more likely to use a weapon, such as a knife or a firearm. Over the past 10 years, 60% of children and youth in this age group died as a result of having been shot (usually with a rifle or shotgun), or stabbed to death by a family member.

One-quarter of all family-related homicides against children and youth end in the suicide of the accused

Compared to homicides in general, child and youth homicides perpetrated by family members are more likely to end in the suicide of the accused person. Between 1995 and 2004, more than one-quarter (28%) of all family-related child and youth homicides ended with the accused person, who was almost always the child’s parent (usually the father), killing themselves.

The likelihood that a parent would commit suicide after killing their own child tends to increase with the age of the child. Less than 4% of infant homicides ended in the suicide of the parent, compared to 61% of homicides against 12 to 17 year olds.

Frustration most common motive for killing child or youth family members

Of all family-related homicides committed against a child or youth since 1995, frustration was cited as the most common motive (47%). This was particularly true when the accused person was the child’s parent, and their frustration was probably related to the stressors involved in care-giving and parenting.

Police found no apparent motive for 18% of child and youth homicides committed by family members. Revenge was cited as the motive behind 12% of child and youth homicides, and arguments accounted for another 8%. Concealment (i.e. hiding the birth of a baby) was the reason behind 16% of infant homicides (under 1 year of age) that occurred since 1997.²²

History of family violence more likely among accused fathers than mothers

Some homicides stem from abuse that culminates into lethal violence. The Homicide Survey asks police to indicate whether there was a history of violence for those homicides involving family members. These incidents of past violence may have been reported to police prior to the homicide, or become known to police during the course of the homicide investigation.²³

Over the most recent 10-year period, a history of violence between the accused person and the victim was reported for nearly one out of every three (29%) family-related homicides against children and youth.²⁴ Prior episodes of family violence were twice as common when the accused person was the victim’s father (36%) compared to when the accused person was the victim’s mother (18%). A history of family violence was also reported in one-third (33%) of child and youth homicides committed by other family members such as siblings.

21. The Homicide survey began collecting data on Shaken baby Syndrome in 1997. Incidents of Shaken Baby Syndrome that result in death may be under-counted due to misdiagnosis and under-reporting.

22. The Homicide Survey began collecting data on concealment in 1997.

23. The Homicide Survey does not identify the perpetrator of the family violence, only that a history or pattern of family violence existed between the accused and the victim.

24. The incidence of prior family violence may be under-reported as it may be unknown to police.

One-third of accused family members had a prior criminal record

According to data collected since 1997, one-third (32%) of family members accused of killing a child or youth had a Canadian criminal record, a lower proportion than persons accused of non-familial child and youth homicide (52%). Among accused family members with a criminal record, more than half (55%) had a prior conviction for a violent offence. The remaining 29% of accused had a prior conviction for a property offence, and 15% for other types of offences.

One-third of accused family members had a mental or developmental disorder

As previously indicated, in 1997 the Homicide Survey began collecting information on whether persons accused of homicide had a psychological or developmental disorder (such as depression, schizophrenia or developmental delays).²⁵ Since that time, police suspected the presence of a disorder among one in three (29%) persons accused of family-related homicide against children and youth. This figure is three times higher than the 9% reported for non-family members accused of killing children and youth.

Family members accused of homicide against children and youth less likely to have consumed alcohol and/or drugs

Previous research has shown alcohol and drug consumption to be associated with an increased risk for many crimes, including homicide (Parker and Auerhahn, 1999). Data from the Homicide Survey lend support to this finding as most homicides are committed when the accused person has consumed alcohol and/or drugs. However, further analysis shows that persons accused of homicide against children and youth, particularly those committed by family members, are less likely to have consumed alcohol and/or drugs at the time of the incident.

Between 1995 and 2004, 32% of family members accused of child or youth homicide had consumed alcohol and/or drugs at the time of the incident. In comparison, half of all unrelated persons accused of killing a child or youth, and 72% of persons accused of killing an adult had been drinking or taking drugs at the time of the homicide.

4.3 Family-related homicides against older adults

by Mia Dauvergne

As indicated in Chapter 3, the 2004 GSS victimization survey of adult Canadians reported that those aged 65 years or older experienced the lowest rates of violent victimization in comparison to those in younger age groups (Gannon and Mihorean, 2005). This finding is consistent with data

from the Homicide Survey which shows that the rate of homicide is lower among older adults when compared to those between 18 and 64 years of age. In 2004, there were 50 homicides committed against older adults (23 men and 27 women), representing 8% of all homicides in Canada.

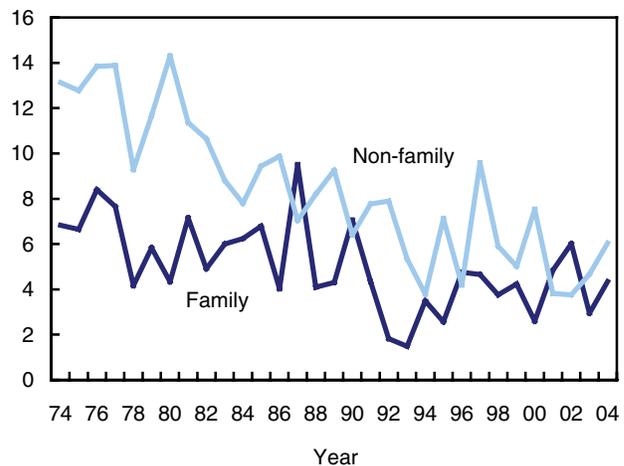
More than one-third (18 or 36%) of homicides committed against older adults in 2004 were perpetrated by family members. Another 14 older victims were killed by acquaintances (such as neighbours, friends, casual acquaintances or business associates), three by non-spousal intimate partners and eight by strangers. Police reported the remaining seven homicides as unsolved.

Over the past 30 years, family homicide rates against older adults have generally been lower than the rates of non-family homicide (Figure 4.7). However, whereas homicides committed by non-family members have been steadily declining since peaking in 1980, those committed by family members have remained relatively stable. Thus, the gap between the two has increasingly narrowed.

Figure 4.7

The gap between family and non-family homicides against older adults (65 years and older) has narrowed, 1974 to 2004

Rate per million older adults (65+ years)



Note: Rates are calculated per million older adults (65 years and older) using population estimates provided by Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

25. This information is based upon police perceptions as to the mental condition of the accused person at the time of the homicide and is not necessarily supported by a medical or health professional's assessment. As such, it should be interpreted with caution.

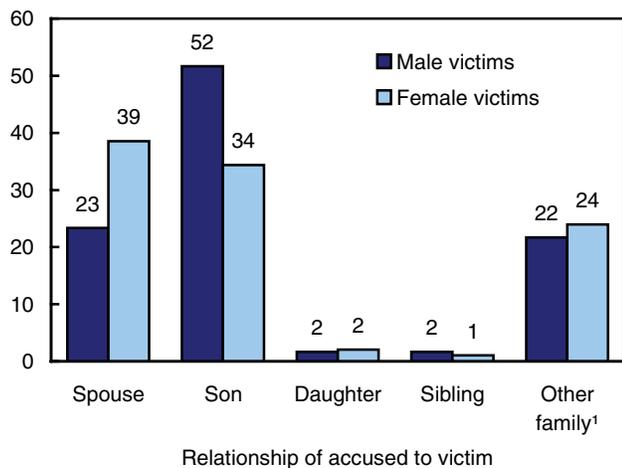
Older women most often killed by family members, whereas older men most often killed by acquaintances or strangers

According to data collected since 1995, older women are most often killed by family members, whereas older men are most often killed by acquaintances (such as casual acquaintances, neighbours, business associates and close friends) (Figure 4.8). Among solved homicides over the most recent 10-year period, nearly two-thirds (61%) of older women were killed by a family member, usually by their spouse (39%)²⁶ or adult son (including step-sons) (34%).

On the other hand, since 1995, half (49%) of all older male victims were killed by an acquaintance and another 19% by a stranger. Among those older men who were killed by a family member, the majority were killed by their adult sons (including step-sons) (52%).

Figure 4.8
Older adults most likely to be killed by spouses and adult sons, 1995 to 2004

Percentage of family homicides against older adults (65 years and older)



1. Includes grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, cousins and any other family member related by blood, marriage or adoption.
Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.
Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Stabbing most common method used to kill older family members

Over the years, the most common methods used by family members to kill older victims have not changed. Between 1995 and 2004, death most frequently resulted from fatal stabbings (34%), followed by beatings (28%) and shootings (19%). Strangulation, suffocation or drowning were also common methods used to kill older females (19%), though less so for older males (5%).

Homicides against older men most often stemmed from an argument, whereas older women most often killed out of frustration

The motive behind family-related homicides against older adults tends to vary depending on the gender of the victim (Table 4.6). Between 1995 and 2004, the most common motive for killing older males was the escalation of an argument (44%), whereas the most common motive for killing older females was the accused person’s feelings of frustration, anger or despair (38%). Since 1995, there have been nine killings in which police classified the homicide as a mercy killing or assisted suicide.

In comparison, over the same time period, the most common motive for non-family members killing both older men and older women was financial gain (e.g. robbery) (33%). Among these non-family-related homicides, 7 out of 10 occurred in the older victim’s own home.

Four in ten homicides against older adults involved a history of family violence

As previously mentioned, the Homicide Survey collects police-reported data on whether there was a history of violence for homicides involving family members. Past incidents of family violence may have been reported to police prior to the homicide, or become known to police during the course of the investigation.

As with family-related homicides committed against spouses and children, those perpetrated against older adults often involve a history of family violence. Findings between 1995 and 2004 indicate that almost four in ten (37%) family-related homicides committed against older adults involved at least one previous instance of reported violence, suggesting an escalating pattern of violence among many homicide incidents.

Prior family violence was more often associated with homicides against older men than older women (49% versus 31% respectively). Given that the Homicide Survey does not identify the perpetrator of the prior violence, it is not possible to determine whether older women were striking back in response to abuse initiated by their male partners, whether women were the sole aggressors, or if the violence was mutually perpetrated.

Four in ten accused family members had a criminal record

As with persons accused of family-related homicide in general, those who kill their older relatives are less likely than accused who are not family members to have a criminal record. According to data collected since 1997, 43% of accused family members had a criminal conviction prior to killing an older adult, compared to 66% of unrelated

26. Spouse includes legal, common-law, separated, divorced and same-sex spouses.

accused persons. Most accused family members had been previously convicted of a violent offence (60%), including one for a past homicide.

Half of all accused family members were suspected of having a mental illness

In 1997, the Homicide Survey began asking police respondents to indicate whether the accused person suffered from a psychological or developmental disorder (such as dementia, schizophrenia or depression).²⁷ Since that time, police have suspected the presence of a disorder among half (49%) of all family members accused of killing an older adult.

Other family members accused of homicide against an older adult (such as sons, daughters or extended family members) were more than twice as likely as spouses (62% versus 26%) to be suspected of having a mental

disorder. Further, police reported a mental disorder more often among male accused than female accused (51% versus 33%).

Most homicide-suicides involve older female victims

As is often the case with many homicides involving family members, about one out of every five (22%) homicides committed against older adults culminated in the suicide of the accused person. Three-quarters of these family-related homicide-suicides involved older female victims, most of whom were killed by their spouse (58%). Some research has suggested that homicide-suicides among older persons may be related more to a deteriorating quality of life rather than the dissolution of the spousal relationship (Aston and Pottie Bunge, 2005).

27. This information is based upon police perceptions as to the mental condition of the accused person at the time of the homicide and is not necessarily supported by a medical or health professional's assessment. As such, it should be interpreted with some caution.

Table 4.1
Family homicides by accused-victim relationship and sex of the victim, 1995 to 2004¹

Victim killed by:	Total victims		Sex of victim			
			Female		Male	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Total family homicides	1,667	100	1,007	100	660	100
Male spouses	629	38	626	62	3	0
Married	227	14	227	23	...	...
Common-law ²	223	13	220	22	3	0
Separated	166	10	166	16	...	...
Divorced	13	1	13	1	...	...
Female spouses	154	9	3	0	151	23
Married	49	3	...	...	49	7
Common-law ²	86	5	3	0	83	13
Separated	18	1	...	...	18	3
Divorced	1	0	...	...	1	0
Parent³	412	25	195	19	217	33
Father	273	16	123	12	150	23
Mother	139	8	72	7	67	10
Child⁴	191	11	88	9	103	16
Daughter/step	23	1	12	1	11	2
Son/step	168	10	76	8	92	14
Sibling	88	5	20	2	68	10
Brother	80	5	17	2	63	10
Sister	8	0	3	0	5	1
Other family ⁵	193	12	75	7	118	18

... figures not applicable

0 true zero or value rounded to zero

1. Excludes incidents where the sex of the victim was unknown.

2. Common-law relationship includes six same-sex spouses.

3. Parent includes biological, step, foster and adoptive parents.

4. Child includes biological, step, foster and adoptive children.

5. Other family includes all others related to the victim through blood, marriage, foster care or adoption.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Table 4.2
Number and rates of spousal homicide, 1974 to 2004^{1,2,3}

	Sex of victim		Sex of victim	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	number		rate per million spouses	
1974	24	90	4.4	16.5
1975	33	91	5.9	16.2
1976	28	83	4.9	14.4
1977	30	80	5.2	13.6
1978	23	78	3.9	13.0
1979	22	90	3.7	14.7
1980	17	61	2.8	9.8
1981	27	82	4.3	12.9
1982	22	76	3.5	11.7
1983	28	84	4.3	12.8
1984	19	64	2.9	9.6
1985	25	86	3.8	12.7
1986	19	70	2.8	10.2
1987	35	79	5.1	11.3
1988	21	72	3.0	10.1
1989	22	76	3.1	10.5
1990	26	74	3.6	10.0
1991	25	87	3.4	11.6
1992	18	87	2.4	11.5
1993	24	63	3.2	8.2
1994	20	66	2.6	8.5
1995	21	71	2.7	9.0
1996	19	63	2.5	7.9
1997	13	63	1.7	7.8
1998	13	57	1.6	7.0
1999	10	58	1.3	7.1
2000	16	52	2.0	6.3
2001	17	69	2.1	8.2
2002	16	67	1.9	7.9
2003	14	64	1.7	7.5
2004	12	62	1.4	7.1

1. Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated and divorced spouses, 15 years of age and over, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.

2. Spousal homicides reported by police include a small number of victims who were separated from a common-law relationship. As population estimates are unavailable for this sub-population, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.

3. Six same-sex partners were excluded from the analysis, due to the unavailability of population estimates.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Table 4.3

Average number of victims and rates of spousal homicides Canada, by province/territory, 1995 to 2004^{1,2,3}

	Average 1995-2004	
	number of victims	rate
Canada	78	4.8
Newfoundland and Labrador	0.5	1.7
Prince Edward Island	0.4	5.6
Nova Scotia	2.2	4.4
New Brunswick	1.1	2.7
Quebec	18.0	4.6
Ontario	24.8	4.0
Manitoba	3.6	6.1
Saskatchewan	4.3	8.4
Alberta	9.6	6.1
British Columbia	11.4	5.2
Yukon	0.6	37.0
Northwest Territories	0.6	31.7
Nunavut ⁴	0.6	59.0

1. Rate per 1,000,000 legally married, common-law, separated and divorced spouses, 15 years of age and over, based on estimates provided by Demography division, Statistics Canada.

2. Spousal homicides reported by police include a small number of victims who were separated from a common-law relationship. As population estimates are unavailable for this sub-population, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.

3. Six same-sex partners were excluded from the analysis, due to the unavailability of population estimates.

4. Nunavut officially became a Canadian territory in 1999. Thus data for Nunavut includes data from 1999 to 2004.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Table 4.4

Known causes of death among spousal and non-spousal relationships^{1,2}, by sex, 1995 to 2004

	Spouse ³				Non-spouse ⁴			
	Female victims		Male victims		Female victims		Male victims	
	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent	number	percent
Total	622	100	153	100	703	100	2,463	100
Shooting	190	31	24	16	135	19	683	28
Stabbing	194	31	101	66	255	36	884	36
Strangulation ⁵	124	20	6	4	119	17	107	4
Beating	90	14	11	7	152	22	694	28
Other ⁶	24	4	11	7	42	6	95	4

1. Excludes incidents where the accused-victim relationship was unknown.

2. Excludes those homicides where the cause of death was unknown.

3. Spouses include legally married, common-law, separated and divorced partners.

4. To control for the effects of age in the comparison of spousal and non-spousal homicides, non-spousal victims include only those individuals 15 years of age and older.

5. Strangulation includes suffocation and drowning.

6. Other includes poisoning or lethal injection, smoke inhalation, burns, exposure/hypothermia, or other.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Table 4.5
Family-related homicides against children and youth by method, 1995 to 2004

Method used to cause death	Victim's age group											
	Total victims		Less than 1 year		1 to 3 years		4 to 6 years		7 to 11 years		12 to 17 years	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Total¹	422	100	112	100	118	100	57	100	63	100	72	100
Strangulation, suffocation or drowning	99	23	30	27	31	26	17	30	10	16	11	15
Beating	85	20	30	27	33	28	12	21	6	10	4	6
Shooting	70	17	1	1	9	8	8	14	22	35	30	42
Stabbing	53	13	5	4	12	10	7	12	15	24	14	19
Shaken Baby Syndrome ²	44	10	30	27	14	12	0	...	0	...	0	...
Poisoning or lethal injection	19	5	1	1	4	3	6	11	3	5	5	7
Fire (smoke inhalation, burns)	23	5	1	1	6	5	5	9	5	8	6	8
Other ³	29	7	14	13	9	8	2	4	2	3	2	3

... Figures not applicable

0 true zero or value rounded to zero

1. Excludes 7 homicides for which method used to cause death was unknown.

2. Shaken Baby Syndrome was added to the survey as a method used to cause death in 1997.

3. Other includes exposure/hypothermia, deaths caused by motor vehicles, starvation, heat, etc.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Table 4.6
Homicides against older adults (65 years and older)¹ by motive and gender, family and non-family, 1995 to 2004

Apparent motive	Homicides committed by family members				Homicides committed by unrelated accused			
	Males	Females	Total	% of total	Males	Females	Total	% of total
Revenge	2	2	4	3	6	2	8	4
Jealousy	2	0	2	1	2	2	4	2
Argument	24	21	45	31	29	7	36	18
Frustration, anger or despair	8	35	43	29	13	5	18	9
Financial gain	6	9	15	10	51	16	67	33
Fear of apprehension ²	0	2	2	1	2	3	5	2
No apparent motive ³	10	16	26	18	24	13	37	18
Other ⁴	3	7	10	7	20	9	29	14
Total	55	92	147	100	147	57	204	100

0 true zero or value rounded to zero

1. Excludes 24 homicides for which motive was unknown.

2. Includes robberies, homicides committed to obtain insurance monies or inheritances, etc.

3. Includes mental illness, dementia, etc.

4. Includes hate crimes, random killings, mercy killings/assisted suicide, etc.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Data sources

Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey

The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) survey collects detailed information on individual criminal incidents reported to police including characteristics of victims, accused persons and incidents. In 2004, detailed data were collected from 119 police services representing 53% of the national volume of reported actual *Criminal Code* incidents. Other than Ontario and Quebec, the data are primarily from urban police departments. The reader is cautioned that these data are not geographically representative at the national or provincial level.

The UCR2 Trend Database contains historical data that permits the analysis of trends in the characteristics of incidents, accused and victims, such as victim-accused relationship. This database currently includes 68 police services that have reported to the UCR2 survey constantly since 1998. These respondents accounted for 37% of the national volume of crime in 2004.

General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS)

In 2004, the victimization cycle of the General Social Survey (GSS) was conducted for the fourth time. Previous victimization cycles were conducted in 1988, 1993 and 1999. The target population included all non-institutionalized persons aged 15 years and older (i.e., individuals living in households). Households without non-cellular telephones were excluded from the survey. This exclusion represents a small proportion (2%) of the population.

Data were collected each month from January 2004 to December 2004. During this period, a total of approximately 24,000 people were successfully interviewed using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI), yielding a response rate of 75%. Some types of non-responses included respondents who refused to participate, those who could not be reached, or individuals who could not speak English or French well enough to complete the survey.

It is important to acknowledge that there are limitations to the data. The data that appear in the report are based on estimates from a sample of the Canadian population and

are therefore subject to sampling error. This type of error refers to the difference between an estimate derived from the sample, and the one that would have been obtained from a census that used the same procedure to collect data from every person in the population.

In addition, there is the possibility of non-sampling errors. These refer to such issues as the respondents' inability to remember/report events accurately, refusal by respondents to report, and errors in coding and processing of data.

Using the 2004 GSS sample design and sample size, an estimate of a given proportion of the total population expressed as a percentage, is expected to be within one percentage point of the true proportion 19 times out of 20.

Homicide Survey

The Homicide survey began collecting police-reported data on homicide incidents, victims and accused persons in Canada in 1961, and began collecting data on family-related homicides in 1974. When a homicide becomes known to the police, the investigating police department completes a survey questionnaire, which is then forwarded to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. The count for a particular year represents all homicides reported in that year, regardless of when the death actually occurred. In 1991 and 1997, the survey was revised and expanded to include additional variables such as previous conviction histories of the accused and victim, employment of the accused and victim, victim's use of force at the time of the incident and Shaken Baby Syndrome as a cause of death.

The Homicide Survey also contains a narrative section where investigating officers insert additional details about the homicide that are not included in the questionnaire portion of the survey. These additional details include such information as the presence/absence of a restraining order or the attempted suicide of the accused. However, generalizations based on the narratives cannot be made to all homicides, since the availability of this supplementary information varies between homicide reports.

Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS)

The Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS) is a national child health surveillance initiative of the Public Health Agency of Canada. The second cycle of the CIS examines the incidence of reported child maltreatment, and the characteristics of the children and families investigated by Canadian child welfare services. The CIS-2003 tracked 14,200 child maltreatment investigations conducted in a representative sample of 63 Child Welfare Service areas across Canada in the fall of 2003.

In all provinces and territories (excluding Quebec) child welfare workers completed a standardized data collection form. In Quebec, information was extracted directly from an administrative information system. Weighted national annual estimates were derived based on these investigations.

The Public Health Agency of Canada provided core funding for the study, with additional funds provided by the provinces of Ontario and Alberta, the Northwest Territories, the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the Bell Canada Child Welfare Research Unit. The project was managed by a team of researchers at the Universities of McGill, Toronto, Calgary, Quebec, Memorial and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Methodology

UCR2 linked database

Using police-reported data from the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, criminal incident records for the same individuals were linked over ten reporting years: 1995 to 2004.

The study analyzes the sequence of police contacts of those persons who had at least one incident related to spousal violence during this 10-year reporting period. This survey captures detailed information on individual criminal incidents reported to police including characteristics of victims, accused persons and incidents.

Coverage

Geographic coverage

Coverage for the UCR2 10-year linked file includes 64 police services in 5 provinces for the study period 1995 through 2004. Police services included in this subset are primarily the major urban police services in New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia and most police services in Quebec. Specifically, the following police services were included in the analysis:

Edmundston	Toronto
Fredericton	Windsor
Miramichi	York Regional
Rothesay Regional	Prince Albert
B.N.P.P. Regional ¹	Regina
Peel Regional	Saskatoon
Brantford	Calgary
London	Edmonton
Niagara Regional	Lethbridge
Stratford	Vancouver
Waterloo Regional	
43 police services in Quebec including Montreal and Quebec City	

Because the study focuses on selected urban areas in 5 provinces, it is not a representative sample of spousal violence offending. Data from these urban areas are rolled-up to produce an aggregate presentation of the results.

The linked file includes police-reported data from police services that consistently reported to the UCR2 survey during the 10-year timeframe. Combined, these 64 police

services represent 44% of the national volume of crime. The major police services that were excluded are the RCMP (currently converting to the UCR2 survey), the Ontario Provincial Police (joined the UCR2 survey in 2001) and the Winnipeg Police Service (joined the UCR2 survey in 2000). Data from the UCR2 10-year linked file are therefore not geographically representative either at the national or provincial levels. Nevertheless, the 10-year linked data file includes a large enough proportion of all police-reported crimes in Canada that parameters of spousal violence offending and repeat contact with the police would unlikely be biased in comparison with the national picture.

Due to incomplete coverage of the UCR2 survey, there is potential for offenders who have committed acts of spousal violence included in the responding jurisdiction to have had contacts with police in a non-responding jurisdiction. However, assessment of the linkage methodology suggests that among the jurisdictions where data are available, less than 1% of the spousal violence offending population had cases occurring in more than one province. These preliminary assessments indicate that inter-jurisdictional mobility is not common for spousal violence suspects, and results may entail a very small downward bias in some reported parameters, such as the number of offences in the 10-year period.

Reference period

A 10-year timeframe, 1995 to 2004 was chosen in order to maximize the time at risk to re-offend, while minimizing the number of jurisdictions with insufficient data.

The subset file contains data provided by police services which have consistently reported to the UCR2 survey since 1995.

Record matching process

Matching records for the same accused person is not always straightforward. Matching was done using four variables: the name of the accused in a 4 character Russell Soundex code², date of birth, sex and province of offence.

1. B.N.P.P. Regional represents the police services of Beresford, Nigadoo, Pointe-Verte, Petit Rocher.
2. Russell Soundex code is an encrypted code derived from the offender's name using an algorithm applied by the police respondent which serves to suppress the actual name of the offender.

This raises the issue of potential false positives because different people may have the same Soundex, date of birth and sex. Thus, matching on these identifiers could result in many false matches (i.e., records for different people would be erroneously treated as multiple contacts of a single person). The result would be an underestimate of the number of unique persons and an overestimate of the number of their police contacts. The use of the Soundex code in combination with the other variables produces a very low but not ignorable probability of false positive matches.

To address this issue, methodologists at Statistics Canada conducted an analysis of the probability of false positive matches. On the basis of this analysis, four categories of “quality codes” were defined (codes 0 through 3). Records whose Soundex code had less than a 95% match efficiency (i.e. quality codes of 2 or 3) were eliminated from the study; these accounted for just over 5% of the total number of records.

Analytical approach

- To present accurate relationships between victims and offenders, the analysis is based only on those criminal incidents reported to police that involved a single accused.
- The UCR2 10-year linked data file includes only persons identified as a current or ex-spouse (including legally married, common-law, separated and divorced partners), 15 to 98 years of age.
- Excluded are incidents where the sex of the victim or the relationship to the accused was unknown.
- Only violations against the person (i.e. violent violations) are included in the analysis.
- Additional programming was required in order to create the three sub-groups for spousal violence offenders since these categories are not routinely captured by the UCR2 survey. These sub-groups are based on the number of incidents of spousal violence that were reported to police during the 10 years under examination.

- To assess changes in the severity of repeated spousal violence, a basic 4 level scale was constructed to differentiate between offences of different degrees of seriousness. The seriousness categories are based on the maximum penalty for specific violent offences as indicated in the *Criminal Code* and adapted from the UCR survey manual. A value ranging from 1 to 4 was assigned to each violent offence: a value of 1 indicates the least serious offences and a value of 4 indicates the most serious offences.

Seriousness scale

Least serious:	1	Maximum penalty 5 years
	2	Maximum penalty 10 years
	3	Maximum penalty 14 years
Most serious:	4	Maximum penalty 25 years

Study limitations

- Because the study focuses on selected urban areas in 5 provinces, it is not a representative sample of spousal violence offending.
- The reader should keep in mind that not all incidents of spousal abuse are reported to police. This analysis is therefore limited to an examination of those persons coming to the attention of police for incidents of spousal violence within the 10-year timeframe of the study, 1995 through 2004.
- The reader is also cautioned regarding the composition of the spousal violence categories in that they may not be exclusive. For example, a spousal offender coded as having a single police contact may in fact have committed repeated acts of spousal abuse either prior to or following the reference period, but only came to the attention of police a single time during the 10-year timeframe under analysis. This precaution can also be applied to the ‘repeat’ spousal violence category (2 to 4 police contacts). Theoretically, spousal offenders coded as having repeat contact with the police may have committed additional acts of spousal violence which were not reported to, or did not come to the attention of police during the 10-year time frame.

UCR2 Seriousness index**Incident-based UCR Violation coding structure**Violent violations – *Criminal Code*

<u>Violation code</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Maximum penalty</u>
1110	Murder 1 st degree	
1120	Murder 2 nd degree	
1130	Manslaughter	
1150	Criminal negligence causing death	
1160	Other related offences causing death	
1210	Attempted murder	
1220	Conspiracy to commit murder	
1310	Aggravated sexual assault (level 3)	25 years
1510	Kidnapping	
1520	Hostage-taking	
1610	Robbery	
1620	Extortion	
1628	Explosives causing death/bodily harm	
1629	Arson –disregard for human life	
1630	Other violent violations	
1320	Sexual assault with a weapon (level 2)	
1410	Aggravated assault (level 3)	14 years
1450	Discharge firearm with intent	
1330	Sexual assault (level 1)	
1420	Assault with weapon/causing bodily harm (level 2)	
1440	Unlawfully causing bodily harm	
1470	Criminal negligence causing bodily harm	10 years
1530	Abduction under 14, not parent/guardian	
1550	Abduction under 14, contravening a custody order	
1560	Abduction under 14, by parent/guardian	
1625	Criminal harassment	
1140	Infanticide	
1430	Assault (level 1)	
1460	Assault against peace-public officer	
1540	Abduction under 16	5 years
1545	Remove children from Canada	
1340	Other sexual crimes	
1480	Other assaults	
1627	Uttering threats	

Definitions

Assault refers to three levels of physical assaults which include the following categories:

- **Common assault** (section 265) this includes the *Criminal Code* category assault (level 1). This is the least serious form of assault and includes pushing, slapping, punching, and face-to-face verbal threats.
- **Major Assault levels 2 and 3** (sections 267, 268) this includes more serious forms of assault, i.e. assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2) and aggravated assault (level 3). Assault level 2 involves carrying, using or threatening to use a weapon against someone or causing someone bodily harm. Assault level 3 involves wounding, maiming, disfiguring or endangering the life of someone.

Criminal Harassment (section 264) is defined as repeatedly following another person from place to place; repeatedly attempting to communicate with the person against their wishes causing that person to reasonably fear for their personal safety or the safety of anyone known to them; watching their residence or place of work; or engaging in threatening conduct directed at the person or any member of their family.

Family and non-family the nature of the relationship between the victim and the accused is determined by establishing the identity of the accused in relation to the victim. Family members include spouses, children, siblings, parents or other persons related to the victim by blood, marriage or another legal relationship (e.g. adoption). All other relationships are considered to be non-family.

Homicide includes first and second degree murder, manslaughter and infanticide. Deaths caused by criminal negligence, suicide, accidental or justifiable homicides are not included in this classification.

Major injuries are those that require professional medical treatment or immediate transportation to a medical facility.

Minor injuries are defined as those that do not require professional medical treatment or only some first aid.

Older adults and seniors are used interchangeably in this report and refer to Canadians aged 65 years or older.

Sexual assault encompasses a wide range of criminal acts in the *Criminal Code of Canada*. Such conduct ranges from unwanted sexual touching to sexual violence resulting in serious physical injury or disfigurement to the victim. It also includes special categories of offences designed to protect children from sexual abuse.

- **Sexual assault - level 1** (section 271) this involves minor physical injuries or no injuries to the victim.
- **Sexual assault - level 2** (section 272) this includes sexual assault with a weapon, threats or causing bodily harm.
- **Aggravated sexual assault - level 3** (section 273) this includes sexual assault that results in wounding, maiming, disfiguring or endangering the life of the victim.
- **Other sexual offences** denote a group of offences that are primarily meant to address incidents of sexual abuse directed at children. The *Criminal Code* offences that are included in this category are:
 - *Sexual interference* (section 151) the direct or indirect touching (for a sexual purpose) of a person under the age of 14 years using a part of the body or an object.
 - *Invitation to sexual touching* (section 152) inviting, counseling, or inciting of a person under the age of 14 years to touch (for a sexual purpose) the body of any person directly or indirectly with a part of the body or with an object.
 - *Sexual exploitation* (section 153) when a person in a position of trust or authority towards a young person or a person with whom the young person is in a relationship of dependency, commits sexual interference or invitation to sexual touching. In this section “young person” refers to a person between 14 and 18 years of age.

- *Incest* (section 155) when an individual has sexual intercourse with a person that has a known defined blood relationship with them.
- *Anal intercourse* (Section 159) and *Bestiality* (Section 160) are also included in this category of offences. These offences may be directed at children, but not always.

Spouse The UCR2 survey defines spouse as the husband or wife through marriage or common-law and includes same-sex partners. Where indicated, separated and/or divorced spouses are also included in this category. The separated or divorced category includes the former husband or wife (by marriage or by common-law relationship) who is separated or divorced at the time of the criminal incident.

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