



III. Violence against women

Violence against women is a serious and pervasive issue both in Canada and around the world. It is integrally linked to enduring gender inequality and is compounded by additional inequities stemming from ethnicity, culture, age, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation. Violence against women strengthens inequalities and undermines women's social and economic status, physical and mental health, well-being and economic security.

Men and boys experience violence differently than girls and women in several important ways. While men are more likely to be injured by strangers in a public or social venue, women are in greater danger of experiencing violence from intimate partners in their own homes. Women are also at greater risk of sexual violence. The fear of violence is more pervasive for women and can prevent them from taking part as full citizens in their communities.

SOME IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CANADA

- Every second, a woman somewhere in Canada experiences some form of sexual violence.¹
- 51% of women over the age of 16 in Canada have experienced at least one incidence of physical/sexual violence.²
- Almost 40% of women assaulted by spouses say their children witnessed the violence against them.²
- Over 86% of all criminal sexual assaults in Canada are against women.²
- Two-thirds of sexual assaults occur in a private home.¹
- 89% of sexual assault victims/survivors have no visible physical injuries.¹
- Less than 10% of sexual assaults are reported to the police.¹
- A victim's decision not to report violence to criminal justice and social services is determined by a variety of factors, some of which include fear of the offender, shame, embarrassment and regional availability of services.¹
- 83% of Canadian women fear walking alone after dark to their cars in a public garage. 75% fear waiting for/using public transportation. 60% fear walking alone in their own area. 39% fear being at home alone.¹

¹ Step it Up! End Violence Against Women; <http://www.stepitupontario.ca/index.html>

² Ontario Women's Directorate, Facts and Statistics; <http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca/owd/english/resources/facts/>



Violence and young women

Women of all ages share experiences of violence but there are additional risks faced by young women and girls. The roots of violence against women stem from power imbalances. Women have less power than men and these power imbalances are more extreme for girls and young women. Young women and girls receive less respect, have fewer rights and have much less awareness of their rights.

- **Girls are more likely than boys to be targets of abuse within a family. Four out of five victims of family-related sexual assaults are girls and over half of physical assaults of children by family members are against girls.¹**
- **Rates of sexual assault experienced by young Canadian women, age 18 to 24, are more than three times the national average.¹**

Additional risk factors for violence against women

Violence can affect anyone, but young women and girls from minority and marginalized communities are especially vulnerable. Young women and girls from minority communities can face difficulties accessing culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Additionally the violence and isolation that immigrant, Aboriginal and other minority women face is often stereotyped as a cultural or religious issue, rather than a result of structural inequalities between genders.

- **Only 57% of Canadian shelters offered services that were sensitive to cultural differences.¹**
- **80% of First Nations women have been assaulted or abused.¹**
- **Rates of sexual assault and other violent crimes are higher on reserves than in other areas of Canada.¹**
- **The rate of sexual abuse for girls living with disabilities is four times that of the national average.³**

³ S. Razack, 1994, From Consent to Responsibility, from Pity to Respect: Subtexts in Cases of Sexual Violence involving Girls and Women with Developmental Disabilities, Law and Social Inquiry