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# Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2007

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics



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# Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2007

*Edited by Lucie Ogrodnik*

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## Symbols

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The following standard symbols are used in Statistics Canada publications:

- . 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<sup>s</sup> value rounded to 0 (zero) where there is a meaningful distinction between true zero and the value that was rounded
- <sup>p</sup> preliminary
- <sup>r</sup> 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

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### Chapter 1 Spousal homicide or attempts and prior police contact for spousal abuse

- Results from a subset of linked police records from 1995 to 2005 reveal that for nearly three-quarters of spousal homicides or attempted spousal homicides, the perpetrator had no prior arrest history for spousal abuse during the study time frame. For those with a history of spousal violence, most were 'repeat offenders' who had between 1 and 3 incidents of spousal violence reported to police prior to the spousal homicide or attempt.
- The proportion of males accused of spousal homicide or attempted homicide was 3.5 times greater than their female counterparts to be 'repeat offenders', and were also more likely to be 'chronic offenders'. For 9 in 10 females who killed or attempted to kill their husbands, the homicide or attempt was their first spousal violence offence reported to police during the 11-year time frame (93%). This compares to nearly 7 in 10 males accused of killing or attempting to kill their wives (69%).
- For over one-third of spousal homicides or attempts (37%), the elapsed time between the last incident of spousal abuse reported to police and the homicide was less than 6 months. Another 18% of spousal homicides/attempts occurred within 6 months to 2 years of previously police-reported spousal abuse. For female victims of spousal homicide/attempted homicide, the window between the most recent episode of abuse and the lethal or near lethal violence was shorter than it was for male victims of spousal homicide/attempted homicide.
- Just over three-quarters (78%) of spousal incidents reported to police prior to the homicide or attempt showed no escalation in the severity of the violence. Despite prior police intervention, 22% of victims of spousal homicide or attempted homicide reported an increase in the severity of the violence to the police before the lethal or near lethal incident.
- Police laid charges in the majority (84%) of spousal incidents leading up to the spousal homicide or attempted homicide. For the remaining prior spousal incidents that were reported to police, victims requested that police not press charges (8%) or the incident was cleared otherwise (8%), such as the accused being committed to a mental hospital or referred to a community-based or diversionary program.

### Chapter 2 Family violence against children and youth

- Data from a subset of 122 police services in 2005 indicate that children and youth under 18 years of age are at greatest risk of being physically or sexually assaulted by someone they know. The rates of physical and sexual assault were highest when the accused was a friend or acquaintance (348 per 100,000), followed by a family member (200 per 100,000) or a stranger (120 per 100,000).
- The rate of physical assault of children and youth by a parent was 3 times higher than the rate of sexual assault (124 victims compared to 39 per 100,000 children and youth). Rates of physical and sexual assault committed by siblings were identical (29 per 100,000), while the rate of sexual assault by an extended family member was double the rate of physical assault (27 compared to 13 per 100,000).
- Nearly 4 in 10 child and youth victims of family violence sustained a physical injury in 2005 (37%). Male victims were more likely to sustain injuries than were females (44% compared to 33%).
- According to the Homicide Survey, in 2005 there were 60 homicides committed against children and youth under the age of 18 across Canada. Over one-third of these homicides were committed by family members.

- The majority of family-related homicides against children and youth in 2005 were committed by parents (71%). Fathers are more likely than mothers to be the perpetrators.
- Infants (less than 1 year of age) experienced higher rates of family-related homicide than older children. In the most recent 10-year period (1996 to 2005), over one-quarter of children and youth killed by a family member were infants (28%). Baby boys tend to be at greater risk than baby girls (40 male victims compared to 27 female victims per million infants).
- Young parents are disproportionately represented among those accused of killing their child. Despite representing only 2% of all parents, young parents (between the ages of 15 and 24) were responsible for 60% of homicides against infants and 14% of homicides against children and youth.
- According to police-reported data in 2005, approximately 2,634 violent incidents were committed against a parent by their son or daughter. The mother was the victim in 7 in 10 violent incidents inflicted by their son or daughter.
- Most violent incidents committed by a son or daughter against a parent were common assaults (60%), followed by uttering threats (18%) and major assaults (17%).
- The age group most often involved in incidents of violence against a parent were 12- to 17-year olds (46%), followed by 18- to 24-year olds (27%).

### Chapter 3 Family violence against older adults

- Police-reported data consistently show that seniors (aged 65 years and over) have the lowest risk of being victims of violent crime. In 2005, seniors represented 2% of all victims of violent crime, or a rate of 160 incidents for every 100,000 seniors. This rate was 2.5 times lower than that of 55 to 64 year olds (404 per 100,000), and 14 times lower than 15 to 24 year olds or the age group at highest risk (2,317 per 100,000).
- Similar to all victims of crime, senior victims were more likely to be victimized by someone they knew (88 per 100,000) than by a stranger (51 per 100,000). Among perpetrators known to senior victims, friends or acquaintances were the most common, followed by their adult children and current or ex-spouses.
- While the overall rates of violence against seniors were higher for senior men, rates of family-related violence were higher for senior women (47 versus 36 per 100,000).
- Senior victims of family violence were most likely to be victimized by an adult child (15 per 100,000) or current or former spouse (13 per 100,000). In comparison, persons under 65 years of age were most often victimized by their spouse, followed by a parent or sibling.
- Older seniors (aged 85 years and over) were less likely to be victims of family violence (22 per 100,000) compared to younger seniors aged 75 to 84 years of age (34 per 100,000) and 65 to 74 years of age (52 per 100,000).
- Over half (53%) of family violence against seniors does not result in physical injury to the victim. When physical injuries are sustained, they are generally minor in nature (37%) resulting from the aggressor's use of physical force.
- In 2005, four in ten homicides against seniors were committed by a family member (44%). Another one-third of seniors were killed by an acquaintance (31%), 17% by a stranger, and the remaining homicides were unsolved.
- Senior female victims killed by a family member were most likely to be killed by their spouse (37%) or adult son or step-son (37%). Senior male homicide victims were most likely to be killed by their adult son or step-son (57%).

## Introduction

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This is the tenth 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, for the first time, the criminal histories of persons accused of spousal homicide or attempted spousal homicide are examined. Using the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, a composite file was created to identify police-reported offences committed by spousal homicide offenders over the previous 11-year period (1995 to 2005). In addition, the report also presents an analysis of family violence against children and youth, and family violence against seniors (65+).



# 1.0 Spousal homicide or attempts and prior police contact for spousal abuse

by Lucie Ogrodnik

## 1.1 Introduction

Our understanding of how violence between spouses escalates and ultimately results in spousal homicide is not well understood, nor is the impact of police intervention on patterns of escalating spousal violence. This study builds on a previous examination of patterns of police-reported offending among persons accused of spousal violence (Ogrodnik, 2006).

The current analysis examines spousal homicides and attempted homicides reported to police over a three-year period (from 2003 to 2005) in conjunction with prior criminal incidents committed by the accused dating back to 1995. The data source for this analysis is an 11-year composite file from the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) survey. The 11-year data file (1995 to 2005) links all incidents of spousal homicide or attempts reported to selected police services with detailed information about the perpetrators, their victims, and prior criminal incidents committed by the perpetrators which were reported to police. Data are based on a subset of 61 police services in 6 provinces<sup>1</sup> across Canada, representing 52% of the population of Canada in 2005.

Using a retrospective approach, the prior criminal history of persons accused of spousal homicide or attempted homicide was examined to better understand the circumstances of lethal spousal violence. Included in this analysis are the types of prior offences reported to police, the severity of prior spousal abuse, prior weapon use and prior injury to the victim. The following research questions are examined:

- What proportion of persons accused of spousal homicide or attempted homicide had a history of police-reported spousal violence?
- How often did these perpetrators come to the attention of police for previous spousal violence? Were they one-time, repeat or chronic offenders?
- Was there a notable increase in the severity of the police-reported spousal violence prior to the spousal homicide or attempted homicide?

- How did the police handle previously reported incidents of spousal violence? Were charges laid, or were the incidents handled in another way?

Understanding the circumstances surrounding lethal spousal violence and the characteristics of the perpetrators and their victims can help to inform policy makers and front-line service providers in developing effective prevention and intervention strategies.

The most recent data on the extent and nature of spousal homicides in Canada are presented to provide the necessary context for the findings from the 11-year linked file. This report finds that for nearly three-quarters (74%) of spousal homicides or attempts, the perpetrator had no prior arrest history for spousal abuse. For those with a history of spousal violence, most were 'repeat offenders' who had between 1 and 3 incidents of spousal violence reported to police prior to the spousal homicide. Despite prior police intervention, 21% of victims of spousal homicide or attempted homicide experienced an increase in the severity of the abuse prior to the lethal incident. For those cases where there was prior police contact, police laid charges in the majority (84%) of spousal violence incidents leading up to the spousal homicide or attempt.

## 1.2 Prevalence of spousal homicide in Canada<sup>2</sup>

According to Statistics Canada's annual Homicide Survey, between 1996 and 2005, spousal homicides<sup>3</sup> represented 17% of all solved<sup>4</sup> homicides in Canada and nearly half (46%) of all family homicides. In 2005, 74 spousal homicides were reported to police. This represents an overall rate of

1. Includes major urban police services in New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and most police services in Quebec.
2. For more detailed information about spousal homicides, refer to Kowalski, M. 2006. "Spousal homicides". In Ogrodnik, L. (ed.) *Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile, 2006*.
3. The Homicide Survey defines spousal homicides as those involving persons in legal marriages, separated or divorced, or in common-law relationships, including same sex spouses. The Homicide survey includes four types of *Criminal Code* offences that constitute homicide: first-degree murder, second-degree murder, manslaughter and infanticide. For additional details, refer to the Definitions section at the end of this report.
4. Solved homicides refer to those where at least one accused has been identified by police.

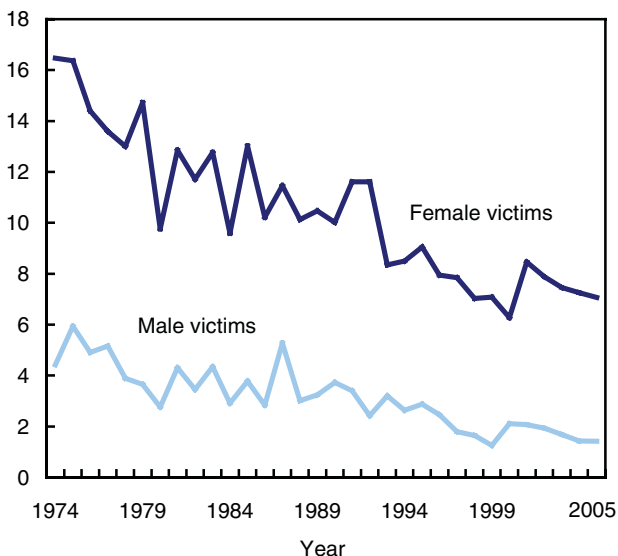
spousal homicides of 4.3 per million spouses in 2005, a decline of 18% over the last ten years.<sup>5</sup>

Since 1975, the rate of spousal homicides has declined by more than half (Figure 1.1). The rate for female victims of spousal homicide dropped 57% (from 16.4 per million married women to 7.1), while the rate for male victims dropped 76% over the same time period (from 5.9 to 1.4). Possible explanations for the decrease in spousal homicide rates include increased public awareness of spousal violence, the implementation of new criminal procedures and protocols to better respond to spousal violence and an increase in services for victims of family violence such as specialized domestic violence courts and emergency shelters for abused women (Dawson, 2001; Pottie Bunge, 2002).

Despite the overall decline in spousal homicide rates, women continue to be more likely than men to be killed by their spouse. Between 1975 and 2005, the rate of spousal homicide against females has been 3 to 5 times higher than against males (Figure 1.1).

**Figure 1.1**  
**Spousal homicide rates declining, 1974 to 2005**

rate per million spouses



**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.

### Spousal homicide most often involved common-law partners

According to the Homicide Survey, between 1996 and 2005, 39% of spousal homicides involved victims living in common-law relationships<sup>6</sup>, accounting for the largest proportion of spousal homicides, yet they comprised just 14% of all 'spousal' relationships during this same ten-year period. Approximately one-third (35%) of spousal homicides were perpetrated by married persons, followed by persons who were separated (24%) or divorced (2%). A high incidence of spousal homicides among common-law couples may be associated with socio-economic factors such as being young, being unemployed and having low levels of commitment to the relationship (Johnson and Hotton, 2003).

### 1.3 Spousal homicides or attempts and prior police contact<sup>7</sup> for spousal abuse: an 11-year data file, 1995 to 2005<sup>8</sup>

To examine differences in patterns of prior police-reported spousal abuse, persons accused of spousal homicide or attempted homicide were divided into three categories:

**One-time police contact:** Individuals who had a single incident of spousal violence brought to the attention of police during the 11-year time frame or 'one-time offenders'. The spousal homicide or attempted homicide was their first contact with police for spousal abuse during the study time frame.

**Repeat contact with police:** Individuals with 1 to 3 incidents of spousal violence brought to the attention of police *prior* to the homicide or attempted homicide, or 'repeat offenders' during the 11-year time frame.

**Chronic contact with police:** Individuals with 4 or more incidents of spousal violence brought to the attention of police *prior* to the homicide or attempted homicide, or 'chronic offenders' during the 11-year time frame.

5. 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. Currently there are no Census estimates for this sub-population and consequently, the overall rates of spousal homicide may be slightly overestimated.

6. Includes 6 same-sex spouses.

7. Police contact does not necessarily lead to charges being laid or recommended.

8. In order to examine the progression of spousal violence leading up to spousal homicide or attempt, a data file was created linking all criminal incidents reported to a subset of 61 police services across Canada from 1995 to 2005. A composite code was created to identify persons accused of committing a spousal homicide or attempted spousal homicide in 2003, 2004 or 2005, and to track their criminal history prior to the spousal homicide or attempt dating back to 1995. For additional details, refer to the Methodology section at the end of this report.

The three categories as defined refer to the contacts with police for incidents of spousal violence within the 11-year time frame. For example, a spousal homicide offender classified as having a single police contact may have committed repeated acts of violence either prior to or during the reference period, but only came to the attention of police a single time during the 11-year time frame. Similarly, a spousal homicide offender who had 'repeat' police contact may have committed additional acts of violence which were not reported to or detected by police during the time frame under study. The 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) on victimization found that 61% of victims reported experiencing more than one violent incident prior to contacting the police, and just under half of these victims reported experiencing more than 10 incidents of violence before the police were contacted (Mihorean, 2005).

Disclosing violence, particularly spousal violence, can be difficult for many victims. This analysis is limited to an examination of violent incidents that were reported to police within the 11-year time frame (1995 to 2005). The escalation of spousal abuse into lethality involves a complex interplay of factors, some of which are not measurable through police-reported statistics. These factors can include control and possessiveness, denial or minimization of the violence, threatened or attempted suicide, pending separation or financial strain (Mahon, 1995). Nevertheless, police-reported statistics provide insight that helps to better understand the transition from spousal abuse to lethal spousal violence.

Results from the 11-year linked file show that there were 258 spousal homicides or attempted homicides over the 3-year period from 2003 to 2005. Of this total, over half (58%) were attempted homicides, 38% were first degree or second degree murder, and the remaining 4% included manslaughter, conspiracy to commit murder and other offences causing death. In order to have a large enough number of spousal homicides for analysis, the 11-year linked file includes incidents of attempted and actual spousal homicides. Throughout this section, the term 'spousal homicide' includes both actual and attempted incidents unless stated otherwise. Data are based on a subset of 61 police services in 6 provinces across Canada, representing 52% of the population of Canada in 2005.

#### 1.4 History of prior police contact

##### **Nearly three-quarters of spousal homicide perpetrators had no prior contacts with police for spousal abuse**

Previous research has indicated that many spousal homicides stem from a history of prior violence (Campbell and Wolf, 2001 and Campbell 1992; Goetting, 1991; McFarlane et al., 1999; Moracco et al. 2003; Wilson and Daly, 1993). However, potentially lethal violence can sometimes occur without prior police knowledge or warning.

##### **Prior violence directed at both family and non-family members<sup>1</sup>**

Some studies on domestic violence have found that the perpetrators are not violent outside the family, therefore suggesting that it is a "specialized type of crime", while other studies have concluded that domestic violence offenders do have extensive criminal histories (Moffitt et al., 2000, Straus and Ramirez, 2004).

Results from the linked file show that family members were somewhat more likely to be victims of prior violent incidents than were non-family members (49% compared to 46%<sup>2</sup>). Repeat spousal abusers were more likely to target family over non-family members, while chronic offenders were more likely to have victimized persons outside the family.

Specifically, among persons victimized by these offenders, current and former spouses (42%)<sup>3</sup> bore the largest proportion of the abuse, followed by casual acquaintances (17%) and strangers (14%). The perpetrator's children were victims in 1% of prior incidents of police-reported violence (Table 1.1).

Males committing or attempting to commit spousal homicide were more likely to have targeted family compared to non-family members during prior violent incidents (51% versus 44%). Among family members victimized by male abusers, their spouse or ex-spouse was their most likely target (87%). In contrast, females accused of spousal homicide were more likely to target persons outside the family rather than family members (66% versus 29%), primarily ex-boyfriends or casual acquaintances.

1. Analysis for this section includes all victims of prior violent incidents committed by spousal homicide offenders including spouses, other family members and non-family members. Non-family members include persons in a position of authority, boy/girlfriends, friends, those in a business relationship, a criminal relationship, casual acquaintances and strangers.
2. Proportions are based on reported incidents where the relationship was known.
3. Previous victims of spousal violence are not necessarily the same person as was killed in the spousal homicide. That is, the offender may have moved from one abusive relationship to another during the 11 years of this study.

The linked data file shows that nearly three-quarters (74%) of spousal homicide perpetrators came into contact with police on one occasion during the 11-year time frame. These perpetrators had no prior arrest history for spousal abuse and that the spousal homicide was their first contact with police during this time frame.

There may be various reasons for this finding. For example, there may have been no violence in the relationship prior to the spousal homicide. Alternatively, there could have been previous violence but it was not reported to police. The General Social Survey (GSS) on victimization found that only 28% of victims of spousal violence reported incidents to police (36% female victims and 17% male

victims). Among the reasons cited for not reporting, victims indicated that they did not want anyone to find out about the violence (36%), they wanted to deal with the violence in another way (21%) or, it was a personal matter that did not concern officials (14%) (Mihorean, 2005).

A number of persons accused of killing or attempting to kill their spouse did have an official record of violent behaviour against their spouse. Among those accused of spousal homicide or attempted spousal homicide, 22% had repeated contact with police (between 1 and 3 prior incidents of police-reported spousal violence). Four percent were considered 'chronic offenders' who had 4 or more contacts with police for spousal abuse over the 11 years prior to the murder or attempted murder. The number of prior spousal violence incidents brought to the attention of police ranged from a single incident to 9 incidents<sup>9</sup>. It is important to note that previous victims of spousal violence are not necessarily the same victim as the spousal homicide or attempted homicide. That is, the offender may have moved from one abusive relationship to another during the 11 years of this study.

**Most spousal homicides or attempted spousal homicides committed by males**

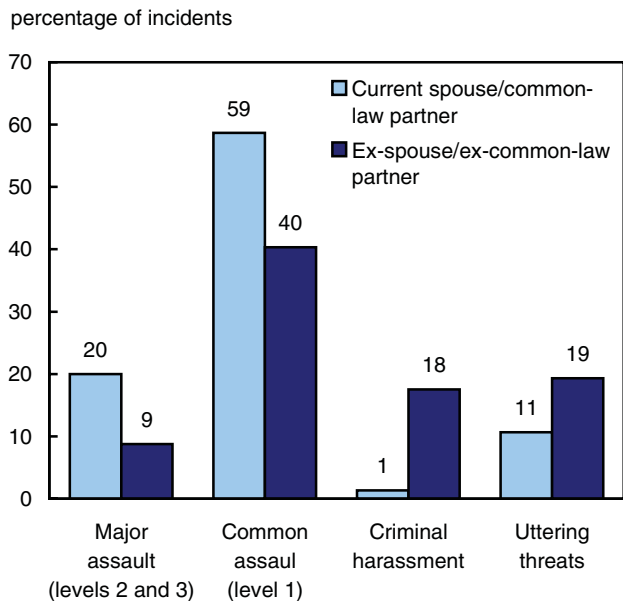
Results from the 11-year linked file show that perpetrators of spousal homicide or attempts are overwhelmingly male (82%). In comparison, females accused of killing or attempting to kill their spouse or ex-spouse accounted for 18% of the total.

Gender differences were also evident across the three categories of spousal homicide offenders. The proportion of males accused of spousal homicide or attempted homicide was 3.5 times greater than their female counterparts to be repeat spousal abusers (25% versus 7%), and were also more likely to be chronic offenders (6%). There were no cases where females accused of spousal homicide or attempted homicide were chronic offenders. For 93% of females who killed or attempted to kill their husbands, the spousal homicide or attempt was their first spousal violence offence reported to police during the 11-year time frame. This compares to 69% of males accused of killing or attempting to kill their wives.

**1.5 Seriousness of prior spousal abuse**

The severity of violence can be measured in a number of ways including the escalating seriousness of violent incidents, weapon use and injury to the victim. The literature suggests that crimes tend to escalate in seriousness as the crime is repeated (Kyvsgaard, 2003). If we apply this theory to police-reported spousal violence, we might expect to see a progression in the severity of the charges laid by police from less serious to very serious charges, sometimes culminating in spousal homicide or attempted spousal homicide.

**Figure 1.2**  
**Prior spousal violence between current spouses/common-law partners more severe**



**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. Based on data from 61 police services representing 52% of the population of Canada in 2005.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 11-year file.

According to the 11-year police-reported data file, current spouses or common-law partners were more likely than ex-spouses/ex-common law partners to have physically assaulted (common assault level 1) their partner prior to the spousal homicide or attempted homicide (59% versus 40%), and twice as likely to have assaulted their partner using a weapon or caused bodily harm (20% versus 9%). In contrast, a greater proportion of ex-spouses criminally harassed (18% versus 1%) or threatened (19% versus 11%) their partners prior to the actual homicide or attempt (Figure 1.2). The higher proportion of assaults committed by current partners compared to ex-partners may be indicative of the proximity of the perpetrator to the victim.

Offences committed by husbands against wives prior to the spousal homicide/attempt most often took the form of common assault (level 1) (51%), assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (15%) and uttering threats (15%). Other violent offences such as criminal harassment, sexual assault, and kidnapping made up the remaining 19% of prior spousal incidents reported to police (Table 1.2). Comparable figures for female perpetrators of spousal homicide were too small to present.

9. No differences were found in the average number of prior incidents of spousal abuse committed by those accused of spousal homicide versus attempted spousal homicide.

### In many cases, spousal abuse did not show a marked increase in severity prior to the spousal homicide or attempt<sup>10</sup>

As a measure of severity, prior offences committed by spousal homicide perpetrators are examined to provide an indication of whether or not there was a progression in the level of violence with each subsequent police-reported episode of abuse leading up to the spousal homicide or attempted homicide. To assess changes in the severity of repeated spousal violence reported to police, a basic 4 level scale was constructed to differentiate between offences of different degrees of seriousness. The categories are based on the maximum penalty for specific violent offences as indicated in the *Criminal Code*. A value ranging from 1 to 4 was assigned to each violent offence: a value of 1 indicates the least severe offences (those with a maximum penalty of 5 years) and a value of 4 indicates the most severe offences (those with a maximum penalty of 25 years). Refer to the Methodology section for additional details.

It is important to recognize that this 4 level scale does not distinguish between different degrees of severity within a violent incident. For example, a punch would be classified by police as a common assault (level 1). Similarly, a subsequent incident involving a punch and choking of the victim may also be coded by police as a common assault. While one may consider this sequence of assaults to represent an increase in severity, this would not be reflected in the 4 level scale. Therefore, these results provide only a broad indication of escalating violence and the results must be interpreted with caution.

Escalation of spousal violence is frequently mentioned as a precursor to spousal homicide.<sup>11</sup> Results from the 11-year police-reported file revealed that just over three-quarters (78%) of spousal incidents reported to police showed a pattern where the severity of the spousal violence either stayed the same or decreased during the study time frame prior to the spousal homicide or attempted homicide. In well over half (57%) of prior spousal violence incidents, the level of severity remained unchanged<sup>12</sup>, and for another 21% of incidents, subsequent episodes of spousal violence were less severe than those previously reported to police. There was an escalation in offence severity for the remaining one-fifth (22%) of spousal violence incidents committed prior to the lethal violence.

Further analysis of the data indicates that a larger proportion of younger spousal abusers, aged 25 to 34 years (29%), showed an escalation in police-reported abuse prior to the spousal homicide/attempt compared to older age groups. The data also indicated that current spouses were somewhat more likely to have had contact with police for more serious offences than ex-spouses (24% versus 20%).

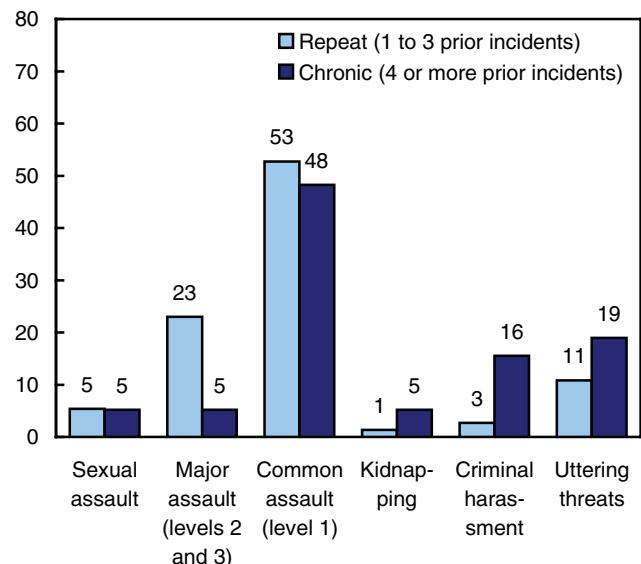
According to Kyvsgaard's theory, we would expect to see more severe forms of spousal violence being committed by chronic offenders compared to repeat offenders.

Results from the 11-year linked police-reported file show a somewhat different scenario where prior offences committed by repeat spousal offenders were generally more severe in nature than offences committed by chronic spousal offenders.

Repeat offenders (those with 1 to 3 prior contacts with police) were more likely than chronic offenders to have been previously charged with assaulting their spouse/partner, or assaulting them with a weapon or causing bodily harm prior to the spousal homicide/attempt. Chronic offenders (those with 4 or more prior contacts with police) were more likely to have been charged with stalking, uttering threats or kidnapping than repeat offenders prior to the spousal homicide/attempt. Both repeat and chronic offenders were equally likely to have been previously charged with sexual assault (Figure 1.3).

**Figure 1.3**  
**Repeat offenders more violent than chronic abusers**

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 61 police services representing 52% of the population of Canada in 2005.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 11-year file.

10. Excludes 'one-time' offenders and offenders whose first and last offence occurred on the same day.

11. Domestic Violence Death Review Committee Annual Report of the Chief Coroner, 2005.

12. Within this category, the majority (84%) of spousal violence incidents remained at a severity value of 1, the category of least severe offences which have a maximum penalty of 5 years (i.e. common assault, uttering threats, other assaults), 13% of spousal violence incidents had a value of 2 (10 years maximum penalty), and 3% had a value of 4 (25 years maximum penalty).

### Weapons not commonly used during prior spousal abuse

Another measure of severity is to examine whether or not weapons were used during the commission of the offence. Similar to violent crimes in general, prior spousal abuse typically does not involve the use of a weapon. There were no weapons used in 8 out of 10 (86%)<sup>13</sup> prior police-reported incidents committed against spouses. Less than 1 in 10 incidents of prior spousal abuse involved the use of weapons (8%), and for the remaining 5% of incidents the type of weapon used was unknown. Among the types of weapons used to inflict harm against spouses, knives or other piercing instruments were most commonly used (5%). Firearms were not used during prior police-reported incidents against spouses.

Four in ten (40%) male abusers used physical force to inflict harm against their wives or ex-wives prior to the spousal homicide, and another 10% used weapons, primarily knives or other cutting instruments or other weapons such as explosives, fire or poison. Comparable figures for female perpetrators of spousal homicide were too small to present.

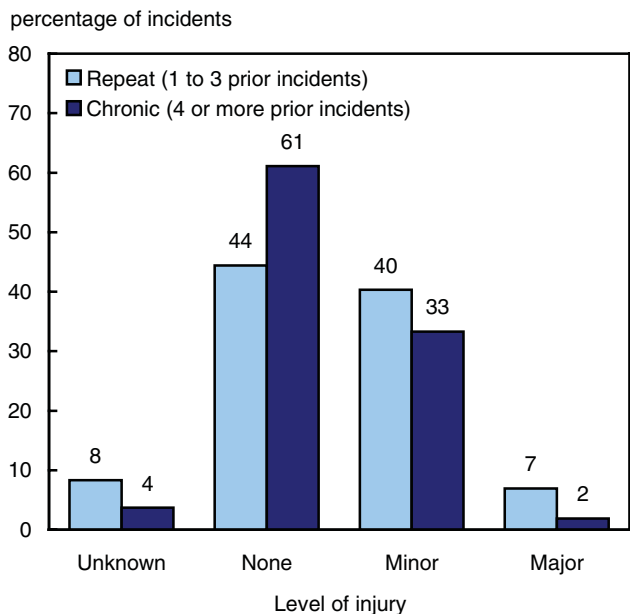
When looking at weapon use during prior spousal abuse by repeat and chronic offenders, the data show that a greater proportion of repeat abusers relied on weapons compared to chronic abusers (14% versus 2%). Repeat spousal abusers were also more likely to use physical force compared to chronic offenders (42% versus 34%).

### Most injuries from prior spousal abuse were minor

Another possible precursor to lethal violence is a history of repeated violence and serious injuries to the victim. The data revealed that over half (52%) of victims of prior spousal abuse reported suffering no physical injury, regardless of gender. Among spousal abuse victims who did sustain injuries, most suffered minor injuries requiring no professional medical treatment or only some first aid (37%). However, 5% of victims of previous spousal abuse sustained major injuries that required medical attention at the scene or transportation to a medical facility. The extent of injuries was unknown for the remaining 6% of victims of spousal violence.

Results also show that the risk of injury from prior spousal abuse was higher when inflicted by repeat abusers. Nearly 6 in 10 (56%) victims suffered an injury at the hands of a repeat abuser compared to 39% of victims who were abused by chronic offenders. Furthermore, repeat offenders inflicted more severe injuries than chronic abusers (7% versus 2%) (Figure 1.4). This may be because repeat abusers were also more likely than chronic abusers to use weapons to inflict harm.

**Figure 1.4**  
Most prior spousal abuse does not result in injuries to the victim



**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 61 police services representing 52% of the population of Canada in 2005.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 11-year file.

### Over one third of spousal homicides or attempts occurred less than 6 months after the last police intervention

Another aspect of partner homicide that requires examination is the elapsed time between previously reported incidents of spousal violence and the spousal homicide or attempted homicide. That is, did the amount of time between reported episodes of spousal violence shorten leading up to the spousal homicide or attempted homicide? Results from the 11-year linked file found that there was a great deal of variability in the length of time between prior spousal violence and the spousal homicide/attempt, ranging from a couple of days to several years.

Looking at patterns of prior offending among repeat and chronic spousal violence offenders, it was found that for over one-third of spousal homicides or attempts (37%), the elapsed time between the last incident of spousal abuse reported to police and the homicide was less than 6 months. Another 18% of spousal homicides/attempts occurred within 6 months to 2 years of previously police-reported spousal abuse.

13. Includes incidents of spousal violence that involved either no weapon or the use of physical force.

For female victims of spousal homicide or attempted homicide, the window between the most recent episode of spousal violence reported to the police and the homicide/attempt was much shorter than it was for men killed by their spouse. The data indicate that nearly half (47%) of spousal homicides/attempts committed against wives occurred within 1 year of a previously reported incident of spousal violence, compared to 17% committed against husbands. In fact, over one-third (39%) of spousal homicides/attempts against females occurred within 6 months of previously police-reported abuse. In contrast, a greater time lag occurred for husbands killed or attempted to be killed by their wives. One-third of homicides or attempts committed against husbands occurred 2 to 5 years after a previously police-reported incident of spousal abuse.

The elapsed time between spousal homicides or attempts and previous police-reported abuse was less for incidents committed by ex-spouses than current spouses. On average, nearly half of spousal homicides/attempts (49%) committed by an ex-spouse were committed within 6 months of previously police-reported spousal abuse compared to 24% of spousal homicides/attempts committed by a current spouse.

The episodes of police-reported spousal abuse did in fact become more frequent as one drew nearer to the spousal homicide or attempted homicide. The elapsed time between police-reported incidents of spousal violence decreased from an average of 2.2 years between the first and second offence, to 7.3 months between incidents of reported spousal abuse and the lethal or attempted lethal violence. This speaks to the short time frames available on the part of helping agencies, including law enforcement, to react to the mounting potential for lethal risk.

## 1.6 Police response to prior spousal violence

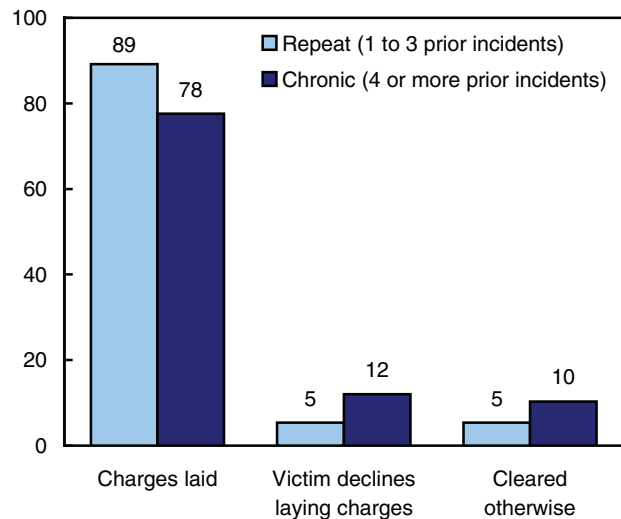
### Police laid charges in majority of prior incidents of spousal abuse

In terms of police intervention prior to the spousal homicide or attempted homicide, the 11-year linked police data reveal that charges were laid or recommended for the majority (84%) of prior incidents of police-reported spousal abuse. Of the remaining 16% of prior police contacts related to spousal abuse, 8% of victims requested that the police not press charges, and another 8% of incidents were cleared otherwise<sup>14</sup>.

Police laid charges in 89% of reported violent incidents committed by repeat spousal offenders (individuals with 1 to 3 prior incidents) compared to 78% of incidents committed by chronic spousal abusers (individuals with 4 or more prior incidents). The lower charge rate for chronic offenders may be partially explained by the fact that despite mandatory charging practices, for 12% of spousal-related incidents the

**Figure 1.5**  
Charges are laid in the majority of prior incidents of spousal violence

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 61 police services representing 52% of the population of Canada in 2005.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 11-year file.

victim requested that police not lay charges, this compares to 5% among repeat offenders (Figure 1.5).

Female and male victims were equally likely to experience an increase in abuse prior to the spousal homicide or attempted homicide despite police intervention (21% versus 20%). Over 6 in 10 (62%) female victims saw no change in the severity of police-reported spousal abuse following police intervention prior to the spousal homicide or attempted homicide, compared to 20% among male victims. Male victims were much more likely than their female counterparts to see a decrease in subsequent abuse (60% versus 17%) prior to the lethal incident or attempted homicide.

14. Cleared otherwise indicates 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: departmental discretion, death of witness/complainant, accused involved in other incidents, committal of accused to mental hospital, accused in a foreign country, diversionary program or beyond departmental control.

### Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee

The Domestic Violence Death Review Committee (DVDRC) was established in 2003 to assist the Office of the Chief Coroner in their investigations of deaths resulting from domestic violence. Comprised of a multi-disciplinary group of experts, the main goals of the DVDRC is to further our understanding of domestic homicides, to reduce domestic violence in general and domestic homicides specifically.

Between 2002 and 2005, 111 cases of domestic homicide were reported in Ontario, averaging 38 deaths per year. Since its inception, the DVDRC has reviewed approximately one-third of these cases. An analysis of information from a sample of cases revealed several common risk factors associated with these domestic homicides. The most salient and consistent factors include: an actual or pending separation (79% of cases); a prior history of domestic violence (71%) and depression or other mental health problems (71%). Other factors such as obsessive behaviour (including stalking), prior threats to kill or injure the victim (or oneself), escalation of violence, and excessive alcohol and/or drug use were present in about half of the cases. The 2005 review also revealed a risk factor not identified in previous reviews, namely that one-fifth (21%) of the cases between 2002 and 2005 involved child custody and access disputes.

Additional factors believed to increase the risk of domestic violence and homicide within an intimate relationship include: poor health conditions, perpetrator isolation, breaching Court orders, gambling addiction, violence outside the home, financial difficulties caused by pending separation/divorce, continued cohabitation after intention of separation and threats of child abduction. Upon reviewing the cases of domestic homicide in conjunction with the relationship history, the Committee found that 22 of the 34 cases (65%) involved seven or more known risk factors associated with lethal violence.

Stemming from the work of the DVDRC three broad categories of recommendations were outlined centering around awareness and education, assessment and intervention, and the need for resources.

To access the Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee annual report, refer to [www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/publications/comm\\_safety/DVDRC\\_2005.pdf](http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/publications/comm_safety/DVDRC_2005.pdf) (accessed May 2, 2007)

## 1.7 Spousal homicide narratives, 1997 to 2005<sup>15</sup>

by Cory Aston

Through the Homicide Survey narratives, police officers can provide a summary of the circumstances leading up to and surrounding a homicide incident. This can include additional details about the homicide (e.g. the existence of extra-marital affairs, whether or not children witnessed the incident, etc.), allowing for a better understanding of

the context in which the homicide took place. The majority of police services provide a narrative for each homicide incident but the level of detail varies. That is, some narratives may provide details such as the length of the couple's separation, whereas others may simply indicate that the couple was separated. As a result, the information captured by the narratives is not consistently reported across the country; however, the information provides good insights into the circumstances surrounding these events.

This analysis reviews the Homicide Survey narratives for spousal<sup>16</sup> homicides occurring between 1997 and 2005. Narratives were available for 687 of the 688 spousal homicide incidents occurring during this time period, of which 629 (or 92%) involved a sole accused person killing their spouse. The complete set of spousal homicide narratives is comprised of the following categories of accused: legally married husbands (31%), common-law husbands (27%), separated husbands or separated common-law husbands (21%), divorced husbands (2%), legally married wives (5%), common-law wives (11%), separated wives or separated common-law wives (2%). The remaining 1% of incidents were perpetrated by divorced wives or current same-sex spouses (legal or common-law).

### Prior offences

The spousal homicide narratives reveal additional contextual information regarding prior police contacts. Over half (54%) of persons accused of spousal homicide between 1997 and 2005 had at least one prior offence, typically for a violent crime (63%).<sup>17</sup> The narratives confirm that there is much variability in the length of time between the prior offence and the spousal homicide, ranging from one day to several years. In addition, the narratives reveal that the criminal histories of spousal homicide perpetrators are not limited to violence against the spouse, but also against other family members and persons outside their family (including pets, neighbours, police officers etc.). Typically though, when prior criminal incidents involved separated or separating spouses, the charge laid or recommended against the perpetrator tended to be for criminal harassment, uttering threats or violating a protective order (57% or 32 narratives). Another 40% of these narratives indicated that the prior offence was physical or sexual assault against the separating or separated spouse.

### Threats of suicide and suicide attempts

Through the Homicide Survey it is learned that just over one-quarter (26%) of the 687 spousal homicides reported between 1997 and 2005 culminated in the suicide of the accused following the killing of their spouse. In addition, the

15. The Homicide Survey narratives are not available in electronic format prior to 1997.

16. Includes currently married, separated and divorced couples, common-law couples, as well as (ex) same-sex couples.

17. Analyses of characteristics of the accused include only those incidents involving one accused person and one victim.



narratives reveal that at least 5% or 35 incidents involved a history of the accused threatening suicide or unsuccessfully attempting to kill themselves before or after the spousal homicide incident. Similar to patterns found among spousal homicide-suicides, indications of prior suicide attempts or threats of suicide are more common among males accused of spousal homicide than females. In 31 incidents (97%) involving a history of suicide attempts or threats of suicide, the accused was a male spouse (For additional information on spousal homicide-suicides including an analysis of narratives see Aston and Pottie Bunge, 2005).

### Length of separation

One-third (33% or 225) of all spousal homicide narratives from 1997 to 2005 included some indication that the couple were separated or in the process of separating. Of those 225 narratives, the majority (71%) also gave an approximation of how long the couple had been apart prior to the homicide. It was found that the majority (57%) of homicides involving separating or separated spouses occur *during* the initial process of separating (i.e. after one partner voices their intentions to leave the relationship, while moving belongings out of mutual residences or while going through formal divorce or separation proceedings etc.). The risk of spousal homicide is elevated in these situations particularly if the accused is jealous of a new relationship or anger/frustration is present due to the dissolution of the relationship. Another 23% of the spousal homicides occurred within 3 months of separation, 10% occurred between 4 months and 1 year following the separation, 6% occurred between 1 and 3 years after the separation, and the remaining 4% occurred more than 3 years after the initial separation.

These proportions are generally similar for both female and male victims. However, males are more likely than females to be killed 3 or more years after separating from their spouse (16% versus 3%) and females are slightly more likely than males to be killed while in the midst of separating from their spouse (57% versus 50%).

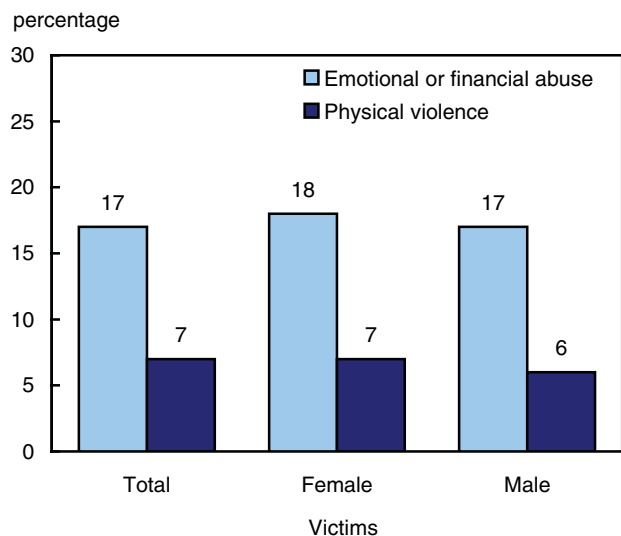
## 1.8 Emotional and financial abuse by spouses

by Diane Beauchamp

Emotional abuse and/or controlling behaviour are often precursors to physical violence in a relationship (Mihorean, 2005; Pottie Bunge, 2000). The 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) found that emotional or and financial abuse was 2.5 times more common between partners<sup>18</sup> than physical violence (17% versus 7%) (Figure 1.6).

Emotional abuse is measured through the GSS by collecting information on the following types of behaviours by an abusive partner: limiting contact with family or friends; putting their partner down and calling them names to make them feel bad; being jealous and not wanting their partner

**Figure 1.6**  
**Emotional and financial abuse is 2.5 times more prevalent in spousal relationships than physical violence**



**Notes:** Includes both current or previous marital and common-law relationships. Excludes respondents who did not state their marital status.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

to talk to other men/women; harming or threatening to harm someone close to them; demanding to know who they are with and where they are at all times; and/or damaging or destroying their possessions or property. Financial abuse is measured by asking the respondent whether their partner prevents them from having access to the family income even when they ask.

### Rates of emotional and financial abuse decreased slightly between 1999 and 2004

It is estimated that in the five years preceding the 2004 GSS, more than 3 million Canadians aged 15 and over, or 17% of all Canadians who were married or living common-law, suffered some form of emotional or financial abuse by their current or former spouse. This represents a small yet statistically significant decline from the overall rate of 18% observed in the 1999 GSS.

Rates of emotional and financial abuse between current spouses and ex-spouses exhibited the same downward trend between 1999 and 2004, dropping from 10% to 8% for current spouses and from 51% to 48% respectively for ex-spouses.

18. Throughout this section, the terms 'spouses' and 'partners' are used interchangeably and describe persons who are married or living common-law, or are separated or divorced from a legal marriage or common-law partnership.

Over the same 5-year period, rates of emotional and financial abuse between current spouses decreased slightly for both female (9% to 7%) and male victims (12% to 10%). Rates for female and male victims abused by ex-spouses remained unchanged.

**More female than male victims are called names or put down by their spouses**

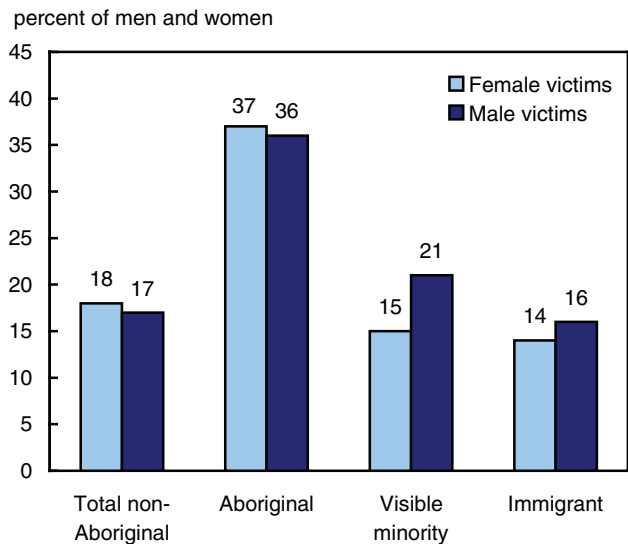
The three most common forms of emotional abuse according to the 2004 GSS are: calling the victim names or putting the victim down (10%); being jealous and not wanting the victim to talk with other men/women (9%), and demanding to know who the victim is with and where they are at all times (8%). Another three percent of spouses indicated that their partner prevented them from knowing about, or having access to the family income, even if they asked.

Overall, both women and men were equally likely to report experiencing emotional and financial abuse (18% versus 17%). This holds true for most types of emotional abuse with one exception. Compared to males, a greater proportion of females were put down or called names (13% versus 7%) in 2004. Previous research has shown that when various factors are examined, being called names or being put down was among one of the strongest predictors of spousal violence (Johnson, 1996).

**Emotional and financial abuse among Aboriginal peoples, visible minorities<sup>19</sup> and immigrants**

According to the 2004 GSS, the rate of spousal physical and sexual violence is much higher among Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal people (21% versus 7%) (Mihorean, 2005). When examining the extent of emotional and financial abuse, similar patterns emerged. In 2004, 36% of Aboriginal people experienced emotional or financial abuse from a current or previous spouse. This rate was much higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal people (17%), the rate for visible minorities (18%) and the rate for immigrant populations (15%) (Figure 1.7).

**Figure 1.7**  
**Spousal emotional or financial abuse amongst Aboriginal women and men is twice the national rate, 2004**



**Note:** Includes both current or previous marital and common-law relationships.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2004.

While no statistical differences were found between the sexes among Aboriginal populations (37% versus 36%) and immigrant populations (14% versus 16%), the rate of emotional/financial abuse was 1.5 times higher among male visible minority respondents compared to female visible minority respondents (21% versus 15%).

19. It is important to note that there is a substantial overlap between the visible minority and immigrant categories in that they are not mutually exclusive. According to the 2004 GSS, 90% of visible minority respondents were immigrants, and 41% of the immigrant respondents were also visible minorities. This may have implications when examining these two subgroups.

Table 1.1

**Prior violent incidents committed by persons accused of spousal homicide reported to a subset of police departments by sex of victim and relationship to accused, 1995 to 2005**

Relationship of victim to accused	Victims					
	Total		Female		Male	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Total victims of violent crime</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total family</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>17</b>
Current spouse <sup>1</sup>	75	24	69	35	6	5
Ex-spouse <sup>2</sup>	57	18	54	28	3	2
Other family <sup>3</sup>	23	7	11	6	12	10
<b>Total friends/acquaintances</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>45</b>
Boyfriend/girlfriend <sup>4</sup>	17	5	14	7	3	2
Ex-boyfriend/girlfriend	16	5	8	4	8	7
Business relationship	13	4	3	2	10	8
Casual acquaintance	54	17	21	11	33	27
Criminal relationship	x	x	x	x	x	x
Authority figure	x	x	x	x	x	x
Stranger	43	14	9	5	34	28
Unknown <sup>5</sup>	16	5	4	2	12	10

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

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

2. Ex-spouse includes separated and divorced partners.

3. Other family includes parent, child, sibling or others related to the victim either by blood or marriage, e.g. aunts, uncles, cousins and in-laws. Includes some cases where age or the relationship to the accused may have been miscoded.

4. Includes close friends.

5. Unknown includes cases where the relationship between the victim and the accused is unknown.

**Notes:** Percentages may not total 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 61 police services representing 52% of the population of Canada in 2005. Current spouse and ex-spouse categories include victims aged 15 to 98. Violent crime includes violations causing death, attempted murder, sexual assaults, assaults, robbery, criminal harassment, uttering threats and other violations involving violence or the threat of violence.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 11-year data file.

Table 1.2

**Prior incidents of spousal violence committed by spousal homicide offenders by offence type, reported to a subset of police departments, 1995 to 2005**

Type of offence	Offences	
	number	%
Sexual assault	7	5
Major assault (assault levels 2 and 3)	20	15
Common assault (assault level 1)	67	51
Criminal harassment	11	8
Uttering threats	19	14
Other violent offences <sup>1</sup>	8	6
<b>Total offences</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>100</b>

1. Other violent offences include attempted homicide, 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. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 61 police services representing 52% of the population of Canada in 2005.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, Linked 11-year data file.

## 2.0 Family violence<sup>1</sup> against children and youth<sup>2</sup>

by Jodi-Anne Brzozowski

The family has been recognized as having a fundamental influence on a child's development, with the greatest potential to protect children and provide for their physical and emotional health and safety (United Nations, 2006). However, according to police-reported data, when children and youth, particularly young children and infants, are victims of violence, family members are often implicated.

Identifying and responding to family violence against children and youth is challenging, given that the family is considered to be a private sphere. Most data collection efforts in the area of family violence against children have relied on incidents of violence or maltreatment being formally reported, either to social service agencies or the police. Research has shown that children often suffer violence without ever reporting it, either because they are unable to do so or because they are afraid to report incidents to authorities (United Nations, 2006).

This chapter examines the most recent data on police-reported<sup>3</sup> violence against children and youth, with a focus on violence involving family members. It includes information on the extent and nature of violence against

children such as the offence type, relationships between victims and perpetrators, and gender and age variations among child and youth victims.

### 2.1 Sexual and physical violence against children and youth

#### Rates of sexual assault over five times higher for children and youth than for adults

In 2005, the rate of sexual assault against children and youth was over five times higher than it was for adults (206 child and youth victims compared to 39 adult victims for every 100,000 population). For child and youth victims, sexual assault level 1 (the category of least physical injury to the

1. Family includes parents, spouses, children, siblings or other persons related to the victim by blood, marriage or another legal relationship (e.g. adoption).
2. Children and youth include all those under the age of 18. Children refers to those persons under the age of 12, while youth refers to those aged 12 to 17.
3. Police-reported data reflect incidents that have come to the attention of the police, including incidents that occurred or were reported in a given year but occurred in a previous year.

#### How violence against children and youth was measured

This chapter examines physical and sexual violence against children and youth, as well as family homicides involving child and youth victims.

Physical and sexual violence against children and youth (under 18 years of age) is measured through data reported by a non-representative subset of 122 police services reporting to the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey. This subset of police services represented 71% of the population of Canada in 2005.

The extent and nature of homicides committed against children and youth by family members is measured using data from the Homicide Survey, which collects information from the police on all homicide incidents, victims and accused persons in Canada.

**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. The term "other sexual crimes" includes a group of offences that primarily address incidents of sexual

abuse directed at children including: sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, invitation to sexual touching, incest, anal intercourse and bestiality.

**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.

**Homicide:** includes 1<sup>st</sup> degree murder, 2<sup>nd</sup> degree murder, manslaughter and infanticide.

An analysis of police-reported violence represents only a portion of the violence against young people. Children and youth can be victims of other types of abuse and violence that are not included in this chapter, ranging from child maltreatment and neglect to violent incidents such as robbery, abduction and criminal harassment. For information on child maltreatment and neglect, refer to Kong, 2006. For additional information on violence against children and youth by non-family members, refer to AuCoin (2005).

victim) accounted for the majority of all sexual assaults (85%), followed by other sexual crimes (14%). More serious forms of sexual assault (levels 2 and 3) accounted for the remaining 1%. In comparison, adult victims also experienced a significant proportion of level 1 sexual assaults (92%), followed by other sexual crimes (4%) and sexual assault levels 2 and 3 (4%). The higher proportion of other sexual crimes committed against children and youth relates to the fact that this category of offences primarily addresses sexual offences directed at children (such as sexual interference, sexual touching and sexual exploitation).

Conversely, rates of physical assault against children and youth were slightly lower than physical assault rates against adults. In 2005, there were 563 victims for every 100,000 children and youth, compared to a rate of 637 for adults. The distribution by type of physical assault was similar for children and youth and for adults. For both groups, common assault (level 1, the least serious form of physical assault) accounted for the majority of all physical assaults (74% and 68% respectively), followed by assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2) (24% for both groups).

In 2005, girls under the age of 18 experienced rates of sexual assault that were almost four times higher than their male counterparts. Specifically, for every 100,000 young females there were 320 victims of sexual assault, compared to a rate of 86 male victims for every 100,000 young males. In contrast, boys face a greater risk of physical violence than do girls. According to police-reported data, young males suffered physical violence at a rate that was 1.5 times higher than their female counterparts (705 compared to 428 per 100,000 population).

Older children and youth experience higher rates of physical and sexual violence than younger children. In 2005, youth aged 12 to 17 experienced rates of sexual assault that were almost double those of children in the 3 to 11 year age group, and almost 11 times higher than those under the age of 3 (Table 2.1).

Differences between age groups were even greater for rates of physical assault. For youth aged 12 to 17, rates of physical assault were almost five times higher than for children aged 3 to 11, and 12 times higher than for children under the age of 3.

### **Perpetrators of violence most often known to child and youth victims**

Common to many nations, the vast majority of violent acts are perpetrated by people who are part of the child or youth victim's immediate environment (United Nations, 2006). According to data from the subset of police services, rates of violence against children and youth were highest when the accused was a friend or an acquaintance of the child

### **Risk and protective factors related to violence against children and youth**

Research indicates that a wide range of individual, family, community and societal factors may increase a child's risk of violence. Some of these risk factors include: age, gender (girls and boys are at risk for different kinds of violence), poor mental or physical health, exposure to family violence, parental stress (due to alcohol and/or drug abuse, criminal activity, lack of social support, maltreatment as children and domestic violence), living in a single-parent family and living in a community in which inequality, unemployment and poverty are highly concentrated (Berger, 2004; Corcoran and Nichols-Casebolt, 2004).

Other factors may prevent or reduce the likelihood of violence against children. Protective factors shown in previous research include: the child's good mental and physical health, temperament, intelligence, a strong sense of self-worth, parenting style (warm and loving as well as firm and consistent discipline), having parents of good mental health with strong social support networks, living in neighbourhoods with higher rates of employment, income and organization, and the presence of formal support systems such as community programs outside the school (Finkelhor and Ormrod, 2001; Freisthler, 2004).

(Table 2.2). For every 100,000 young persons, 348 were victims of physical or sexual violence at the hands of a friend or an acquaintance, 200 experienced violence by a family member, and 120 were victimized by a stranger.

Rates of sexual assault were higher for female victims than for males regardless of their relationship to the accused. In contrast, there were some gender differences in the child victim's relationship to the accused for physical assaults. While females were slightly more likely than males to have been physically assaulted by a family member (130 compared with 127 per 100,000), rates for females were lower than those of males when the accused was either a friend or an acquaintance (195 compared with 324) or a stranger (49 compared with 148) (Table 2.2).

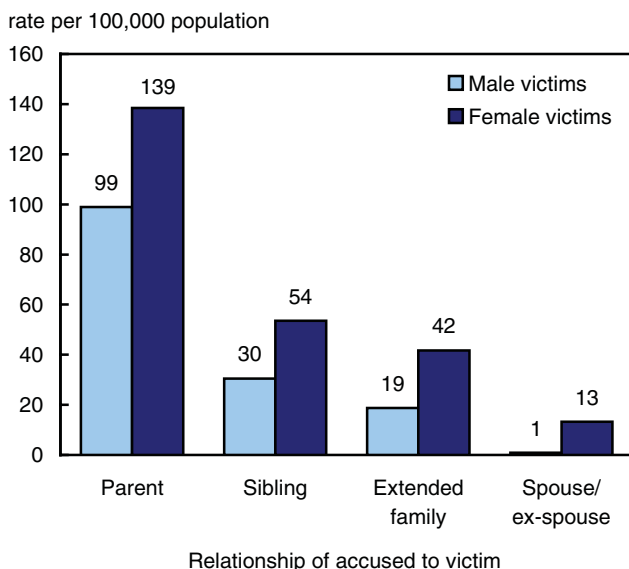
Despite the fact that children in the youngest age groups experienced much lower rates of physical and sexual assaults than their older counterparts, they were most vulnerable to violence at the hands of a family member. Rates of violence against children by a family member were four times higher when the child was under 3 years of age and over twice as high for older children compared to rates of violence committed by a friend or an acquaintance. Infants and young children have limited independent social interactions outside the home. As children grow, they spend increasing amounts of time outside the home and away from the family, which may increase their risk of experiencing violence at the hands of non-family members (Table 2.3).

## 2.2 Family violence against children and youth

### Parents most common perpetrators of family violence against children and youth

Data show that when children and youth are victims of family violence, parents are the most commonly identified perpetrators. In 2005, for every 100,000 children and youth, there were 163 victims of physical or sexual assault that were committed by a parent. This rate was almost three times higher than the rate of assaults by siblings (57 per 100,000), and four times higher than the rate of assaults committed against children and youth by extended family members<sup>4</sup> (41 per 100,000) (Table 2.4) (Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1**  
Rates of family violence higher for girls than for boys, regardless of relationship, 2005



**Notes:** Includes children and youth under the age of 18. Excludes incidents where the victim's sex, age and/or relationship between the victim and the accused was unknown. The "parent" category includes victims under the age of 18 where the relationship of the accused to the victim was miscoded as "child" and should have been coded as "parent". Includes victims of either physical or sexual assault. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. Rate per 100,000 population for the geographic area policed by the UCR2 respondents, based on population estimates provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada.

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

The rate of physical assault of children and youth by a parent was three times higher than the rate of sexual assault by a parent (124 compared to 39 victims per 100,000 children and youth). In comparison, rates of physical and sexual assault committed by siblings were identical (29 per 100,000), and when the perpetrator was an extended family member the rate of sexual assault was double the rate of physical assault (27 compared to 13 per 100,000 children and youth) (Table 2.4).

In 2005, male family members were identified as the accused in 97% of all family-related sexual assaults and in 71% of physical assaults against children and youth. For male perpetrated family-related sexual assaults, fathers<sup>5</sup> were involved in 38% of incidents, followed by male extended family members (31%) and brothers (28%). For physical assaults where male family members were identified as the accused, fathers were the most frequently identified (61%), followed by brothers (20%), spouses/ex-spouses<sup>6</sup> (11%) and extended family members (8%).

Female family members were seldom identified as perpetrators of violence against children and youth in the family. Females were accused in 3% of family-related sexual assaults and 29% of physical assaults. In 44% of incidents of female-perpetrated sexual assaults, a sister was identified as the accused, followed by a mother (36%) or an extended family member (21%). Of all child and youth victims of family-related physical assaults committed by females, 82% were assaulted by their mother, 10% by a sister, 7% by an extended family member and 1% by a spouse or ex-spouse.

### Girls much more likely than boys to be victims of sexual assault by family members

Similar to overall rates of sexual assault, police-reported rates of sexual assault against children committed by family members were over three times higher for female victims than for male victims (108 compared with 32 incidents per 100,000 population). Rates of physical assault against female and male children by family members were similar (130 compared with 127 incidents per 100,000 population) (Table 2.2).

As in previous years, in 2005, young teenage girls between 12 and 15 years of age experienced the highest rates of sexual assault by a family member, with the highest rate at age 13 (248 per 100,000). While sexual assault rates were much lower for male child victims, they were highest among boys between 3 and 5 years of age, with the highest rate at age 4 (72 per 100,000 population) (Figure 2.2).

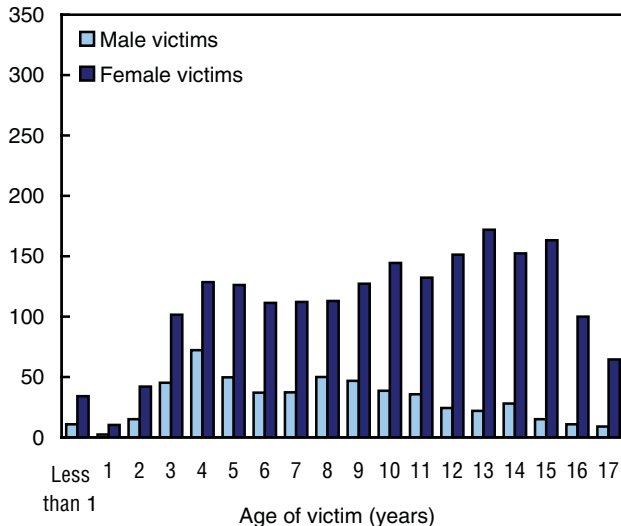
### Family-related physical assaults highest among young teenage girls

Rates of family-related physical assault generally increased with the age of the victim. For girls, the rate of physical assaults committed by a family member increased steadily from age 11 to the highest rate at age 17 (113 and 297

4. Extended family includes persons related by blood, marriage, adoption or foster care (i.e., aunts, uncles, cousins, sisters/brothers-in-law, etc).
5. The UCR2 survey combines biological, step and adopted fathers into one category.
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.

**Figure 2.2**  
**Family-related sexual assault rates highest for teen girls and for young boys, 2005**

rate per 100,000 males and females

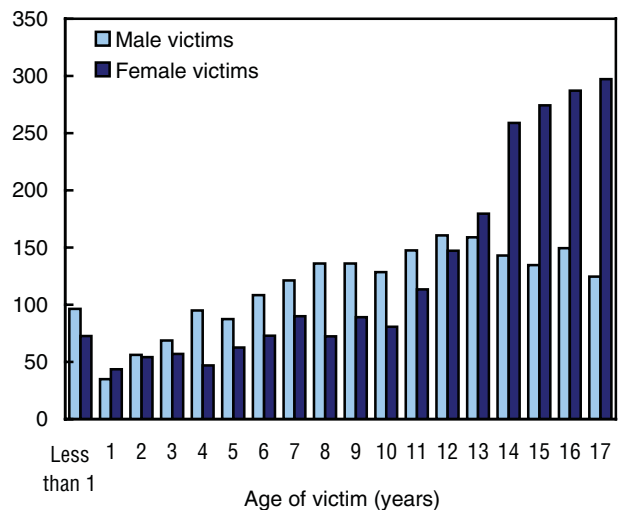


**Notes:** Includes children and youth under the age of 18. Excludes incidents where the victim's sex, age and/or relationship between the victim and the accused was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. Rate per 100,000 population for the geographic area policed by the UCR2 respondents, based on population estimates provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada.

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

**Figure 2.3**  
**Rates of family-related physical assaults increase with age, especially for teenage girls, 2005**

rate per 100,000 males and females



**Notes:** Includes children and youth under the age of 18. Excludes incidents where the victim's sex and/or relationship between the victim and the accused was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. Counts are based on data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. Rate per 100,000 population for the geographic area policed by the UCR2 respondents, based on population estimates provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada.

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

**Trends in family violence against children and youth**

The UCR2 Trend Database can be used to examine trends in physical and sexual assault against children and youth from 1998 to 2005. This information is based on a non-representative sample of 62 police services that have consistently reported to the survey and account for 51% of the population of Canada in 2005.

According to these non-representative data, the rate of sexual assault against children and youth by a family member increased 15% between 2003 and 2005. Similarly, rates of physical assault also showed an increase (8%) during the past two years. In contrast, rates of sexual assault by a

non-family member remained the unchanged from 2003 to 2005 (119 incidents per 100,000 population), and the rate for physical assault by a non-family member fell 10% during the same time period.

In 1998, the rate of child and youth sexual assault committed by strangers was approximately twice the rate of sexual assaults perpetrated by a family member, with the difference in rates gradually narrowing to 1.5 times the rate by 2005. A similar trend is also evident for physical assaults against children and youth. In 1998, the rate for non-family members was 3.7 times higher than the rate for family members (354 versus 95 per 100,000); by 2005, the gap narrowed to 2.6 times the rate (333 versus 128 per 100,000).

incidents per 100,000). Rates of physical assault against boys by a family member showed gradual increases to the highest age-specific rate of 239 incidents per 100,000 at 12 years of age (Figure 2.3). Higher rates of family-related physical assault among older children may be partially related to increasing independence and awareness about family violence. It may be that as the child develops the independence of adolescence, he or she becomes more informed about what constitutes violence and finds the courage to report their victimization to authorities (United Nations, 2006).

**One third of child victims of family violence suffer injuries**

One of the most visible consequences of violence against children is physical injury. According to police-reported data, just over one-third (36%) of child and youth victims suffered a minor physical injury<sup>7</sup> and 1% suffered a major physical injury<sup>8</sup> (Table 2.5).

7. Minor injuries are defined as those that require no professional medical treatment or only some first aid.  
 8. Major injuries are defined as those that require professional medical attention at the scene or transportation to a medical facility.

Consistent with previous research (United Nations, 2006; Brzozowski, 2004), male victims of family violence were more likely to sustain injuries than females. In 2005, 44% of young male victims suffered injuries (42% minor and 2% major injuries) compared to one-third of young female victims (32% minor and 1% major injuries) (Table 2.5).

### 2.3 Parents victimized by their children<sup>9</sup>

by *Diane Beauchamp*

Violence against parents is a rarely studied form of family violence (Bobic, 2004). It can manifest itself as acts of physical, verbal or psychological abuse towards a father or a mother by a child. According to 2005 police-reported data, approximately 2,634 police-reported incidents of violent crimes were committed against a father or mother by their son or daughter (Table 2.6). Amongst the sons and daughters who abused their parents, 53% were 18 years old and over, while the remainder (47%) were less than 18 years of age. Six out of 10 accused were living at home at the time of the incident, which represents 73% of the under 18 age group and 51% of adult children.

#### Mothers most common targets of abuse by their child

According to Cottrell (2001), physical and verbal abuse by either a son or daughter is most often directed towards the mother rather than the father. In 2005, police-reported data show that the mother was the victim in 7 out of 10 violent incidents inflicted by their child (Table 2.6).

#### Parent victims most likely to experience common assault

Nearly two-thirds (60%) of violent incidents committed against a parent by their child were common assaults (level 1), 18% of incidents were uttering threats, and another 17% were serious assaults (levels 2 and 3). Parents were rarely victims of other types of violent crimes such as criminal harassment (2%), robbery (1%) and other violent offences such as kidnapping, extortion and arson (2%).

When looking at the proportion of violent incidents committed against mothers compared to fathers, the data show that common assaults accounted for nearly two-thirds (61%) of incidents committed against mothers, followed by uttering threats (18%) and major assault (15%). In comparison, 56% of incidents committed against fathers involved common assault, followed by major assaults (20%), and uttering threats (19%).

#### Most parents victimized by their child suffer no physical injuries

Over half of parents (53%) who were victimized by a child suffered no injury, and nearly 36% sustained minor physical injuries. It is rare for a parent to sustained serious injuries (2%) resulting from a violent incident committed

by their child. The data show little difference between a father's and a mother's risk of serious injury (3% versus 1%). This is likely due to the large proportion of common assaults committed against parents, the least serious form of physical assault.

Physical force is most commonly used by a child to cause injury to their parent (79% of incidents), while the use of a weapon<sup>10</sup> is much less common (16%). Firearms are rarely used in incidents of violence against a parent (0.3%).

#### Police lay charges in most incidents of parent abuse

Police laid charges in most incidents of physical or verbal violence against a parent (64%). However, in nearly one-fifth of incidents, parents decided not to lay charges against their child (19%). In another 12% of incidents the police issued a warning, and police made a referral to a community-based program or recommended a diversionary program<sup>11</sup> in 2% of incidents.

#### Young persons aged 12 to 17 most often the accused in violence towards a parent

Seven out of 10 (68%) young children (under 18 years of age) accused of physical or verbal abuse of a parent were males. When considering adult children accused (18 years and older), 8 out of 10 were males. The age group most often involved in incidents of violence against a parent were 12- to 17-year-olds (46%), followed by 18- to 24-year-olds (27%). Only 1% of violent incidents towards parents were committed by children under 12-years of age.

### 2.4 Family-related homicides against children and youth

by *Hannah McGeachie*

In 2005, there were 60 homicides committed against children and youth<sup>12,13</sup> across Canada; 41 of the victims were male, 19 were female. This represents a 9% increase from 2004, when the number of children and youth killed in Canada was at its lowest since data were first collected in 1974.<sup>14</sup> This increase was driven by an increase in the number of male victims (30 in 2004, which was a historic

9. Throughout this section, the terms 'children' and 'child' are used interchangeably and refer to all children (biological or adopted) of the victim and includes children under the age of 18 (1,228) and adult children aged 18 years and older (1,406).

10. Includes knife or other piercing or cutting instruments, club or blunt instruments, fire, firearms and other weapons.

11. Diversionary programs include pre-charge diversion and community justice programs which are often run out of the offices of community programs.

12. Children and youth include those under the age of 18 years.

13. Child and youth homicides may be under-reported since some deaths caused by intentional injury may be misclassified as resulting from natural or undetermined causes.

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

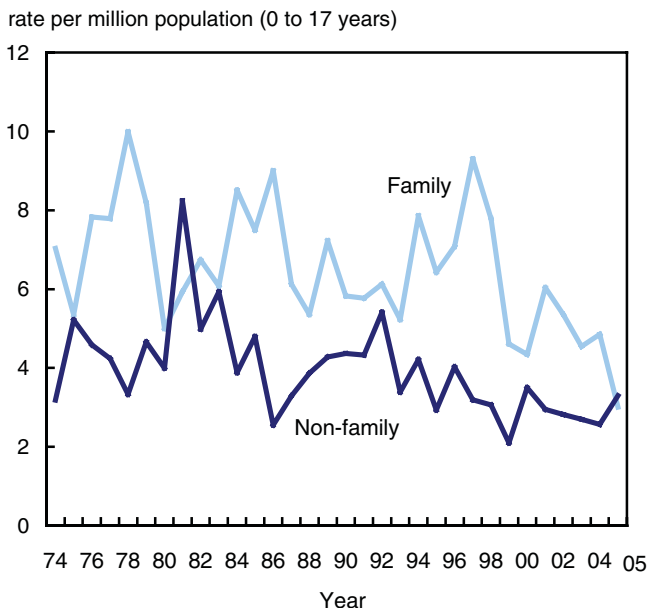


low), as the number of female victims declined between 2004 and 2005 and was the lowest count since 1974. Homicides against children and youth represent nearly one out of every ten homicides in Canada.

Over one-third (21) of homicides against children and youth were committed by family members in 2005. Non-family members (including acquaintances and friends) were responsible for 17 child and youth homicides, 6 were killed by strangers and the remaining 16 homicides are unsolved.

Overall, the rate of family-related homicide against children and youth has fluctuated since 1974 without a discernable pattern (Figure 2.4). The rate decreased by 38% (13 fewer homicides) between 2004 and 2005 to just over 3 homicides per million children and youth, the lowest rate in 31 years. The rate of family-related homicide against children and youth has been consistently higher than the rate of non-family-related homicide since 1974. The only exceptions occurred in 1981 and 2005.

**Figure 2.4**  
Rates of family homicides against children and youth higher than non-family homicides, 1974 to 2005

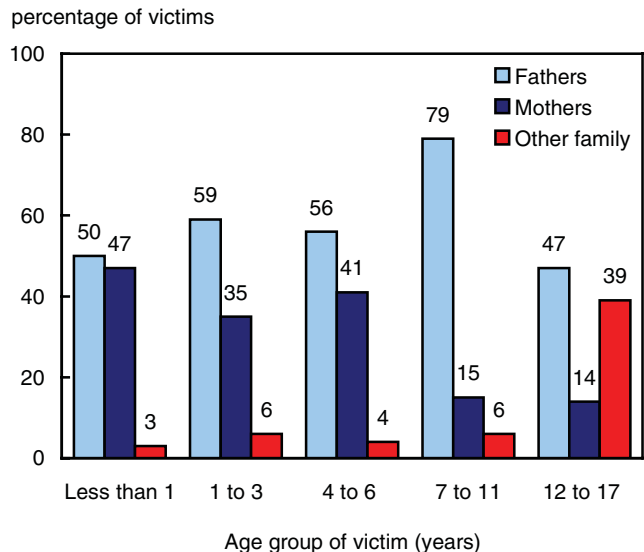


**Notes:** Rates are calculated per million children and youth (0 to 17 year olds) using population estimates provided by Statistics Canada, Census and Demographic Statistics, Demography Division.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

**Parents<sup>15</sup> are responsible for most family-related homicides against children and youth**

Data has consistently shown that the majority of family-related homicides against children and youth are committed

**Figure 2.5**  
Fathers responsible for the majority of family homicides against children and youth, 1996 to 2005



**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 95% of the total number of family-related homicides against children and youth from 1996 to 2005.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

by parents. In 2005, over seven in ten (71%) perpetrators of family-related homicides against children and youth were parents. This is consistent with the trend over the past three decades; between 1975 and 2004, 86% of family-related homicide victims who were under the age of 18 were killed by a parent.

Fathers are more likely than mothers to be the perpetrators of family-related homicide against children and youth (Figure 2.5). Between 1996 and 2005, 56% of children and youth killed by a family member were killed by their fathers, 33% by their mothers, and the remaining 11% by other family members (including siblings, grandparents, cousins, or other extended family<sup>16</sup>). The proportion of homicides committed by parents was higher when the victim was under 12 years of age (65%) than for adolescent victims aged 12 to 17 years (35%).

Over the past decade, the proportion of step-parents accused of killing a child has increased from 6% to 15%. This may be due, in part, to the increase in the number of step-families in recent years. The 2001 Census found that the number of step-families in Canada increased 17% between 1995 and 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2002a).

15. Includes step and adopted parents.  
16. Related to the victim by blood, marriage, or adoption.

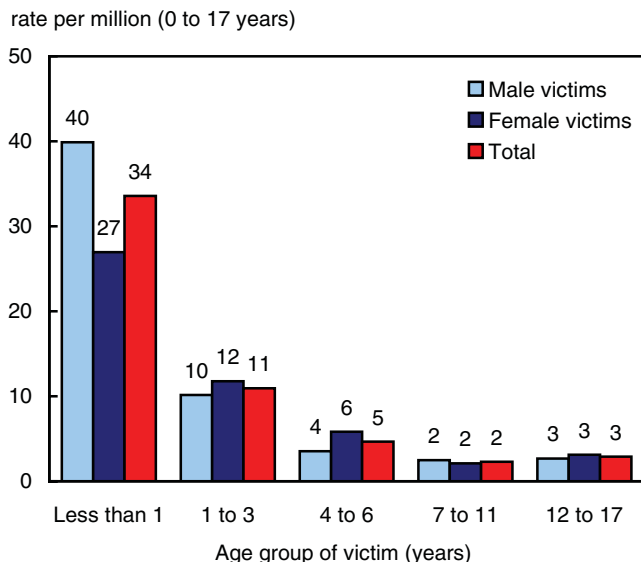
### Young parents over-represented as accused

While young parents between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age represent only 2% of all parents (Statistics Canada, 2002b), they are responsible for 60% of homicides against infants (children less than one year of age), and 14% of homicides against children and youth.

### Family-related homicide rates highest among infants

In the most recent 10-year period (1996 to 2005), over one-quarter (28%) of children and youth killed by a family member were infants (under the age of one year). Baby boys tend to be at greater risk than baby girls for family-related homicide. The rate of family-related homicide against boys averaged 40 per million male infants between 1996 and 2005, compared to 27 per million female infants (Figure 2.6).

**Figure 2.6**  
**Infants are at greatest risk of homicide by a family member, 1996 to 2005**



**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.

Homicide rates of male and female children become more similar once children reach their first birthday, and their risk continues to decrease as they age. The rate for 1 to 3 year olds (11 per million) between 1996 and 2005 was three times lower than for infants (34 per million), and the rate for youths aged 12 to 17 was eleven times lower (3 per million). The majority (68%) of youth homicide victims were killed by someone outside the family, such as a casual acquaintance, stranger or close friend.

The methods used in family-related homicides against children and youth varied depending on the age of the

victim (Table 2.7). Over the past 10 years, younger victims, aged 0 to 6 years of age, were most likely to be killed by the use of physical force. One-quarter (26%) died from strangulation, 25% from beating and 18% from Shaken Baby Syndrome.<sup>17</sup>

Children and youth between the ages of 7 and 17 who were victims of family-related homicide were more likely to be killed with a weapon. Since 1996, 39% of child homicide victims were shot and 24% were stabbed to death.

### Accused committed suicide in one-quarter of family-related homicides against children and youth

Family-related homicides committed against children and youth were more likely than homicides in general (6% of incidents) to be followed by the suicide of the perpetrator. Over one-quarter (27%) of homicides committed against children and youth by family members between 1996 and 2005 were followed by the suicide of the accused person. In almost all (95%) of these suicides, the accused was the child's parent or step-parent. Parent-child homicide-suicides were predominantly committed by the child's father or step-father (75%).

Parents of older children were more likely than parents of younger children to commit suicide after killing their own child. Six in ten (61%) homicides against 12 to 17 year olds were followed by the accused parent's suicide, compared to less than 4% of infant homicides.

### History of family violence reported in one-third of child and youth homicides

A history of family violence<sup>18</sup> was reported by police in nearly one-third (30%) of homicides committed against children and youth over the most recent 10-year period. Family violence was more likely to have been present when the accused person was the victim's father (36%) compared to the victim's mother (21%). When the homicide was committed by another family member such as a sibling, a history of abuse was present in 34% of incidents.

Police reported the presence of a psychological or developmental disorder<sup>19</sup> such as depression, schizophrenia or developmental delays in over one-quarter (28%) of family-related homicides against children and youth. In contrast, these types of disorders were suspected in 8% of non-family-related homicides against children and youth.

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

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

19. 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.

**Table 2.1**  
**Victims of physical and sexual assault by age group, reported to a subset of police services, 2005**

Type of assault	Children and youth victims by age group											
	Total victims		Adult victims		Children and youth victims		Less than 3		3 to 11		12 to 17	
	number	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	
<b>Assault - total</b>	<b>159,031</b>	<b>122,136</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>36,895</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>10,046</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>25,959</b>	<b>1,477</b>	
<b>Sexual assault - total</b>	<b>16,940</b>	<b>7,063</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>9,877</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>4,179</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>5,493</b>	<b>313</b>	
Aggravated sexual assault (level 3)	121	71	0	50	1	2	0	21	1	27	2	
Sexual assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2)	289	203	1	86	2	1	0	15	1	70	4	
Sexual assault (level 1)	14,901	6,529	36	8,372	174	174	25	3,415	146	4,783	272	
Other sexual crimes <sup>1</sup>	1,629	260	1	1,369	29	28	4	728	31	613	35	
<b>Physical assault - total</b>	<b>142,091</b>	<b>115,073</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>27,018</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>5,867</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>20,466</b>	<b>1,164</b>	
Aggravated assault (level 3)	2,146	1,845	10	301	6	45	6	24	1	232	13	
Assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2)	34,310	27,955	155	6,355	132	156	22	1,282	55	4,917	280	
Common assault (level 1)	98,274	78,205	433	20,069	418	461	65	4,504	193	15,104	859	
Unlawfully causing bodily harm	462	368	2	94	2	8	1	11	0	75	4	
Discharge firearm with intent	114	89	0	25	1	0	0	4	0	21	1	
Assault against peace/public officer	5,385	5,370	30	15	0	0	0	4	0	11	1	
Criminal negligence causing bodily harm	148	108	1	40	1	11	2	11	0	18	1	
Other assaults	1,252	1,133	6	119	2	4	1	27	1	88	5	

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

1. Includes such offences as sexual interference, sexual exploitation, invitation to sexual touching, incest, anal intercourse and bestiality.

**Notes:** Children and youth include all those under the age of 18. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown. Data are not nationally representative.

The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collected data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. 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.

**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 services, 2005**

Relationship of accused to victim	Total assault						Sexual assault <sup>1</sup>						Physical assault <sup>2</sup>					
	Total		Female		Male		Total		Female		Male		Total		Female		Male	
	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,895</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>18,355</b>	<b>748</b>	<b>18,540</b>	<b>791</b>	<b>9,877</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>7,852</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>2,025</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>27,018</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>10,503</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>16,515</b>	<b>705</b>
Family <sup>3</sup>	9,577	200	5,847	238	3,730	159	3,405	71	2,658	108	747	32	6,172	129	3,189	130	2,983	127
Friend/acquaintance <sup>4</sup>	16,716	348	8,229	335	8,487	362	4,336	90	3,433	140	903	39	12,380	258	4,796	195	7,584	324
Stranger	5,774	120	2,140	87	3,634	155	1,114	23	945	38	169	7	4,660	97	1,195	49	3,465	148
Unknown <sup>5</sup>	4,828	101	2,139	87	2,689	115	1,022	21	816	33	206	9	3,806	79	1,323	54	2,483	106

1. 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.
2. 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. Includes spouse, ex-spouse, parent, sibling and extended family.
4. Includes any relationship in which the accused and the victim are familiar with each other, but are not related, or in a legal guardianship relationship.
5. Includes cases where the relationship between the victim and the accused is unknown.

**Notes:** Children and youth include all those under the age of 18. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collected data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. 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.

**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 services, 2005**

Relationship of accused to victim	Total assault								Sexual assault <sup>1</sup>								Physical assault <sup>2</sup>							
	Less than Total	3 to 3	6 to 5	9 to 8	12 to 11	15 to 14	17 to 17	17 to 17	Less than Total	3 to 3	6 to 5	9 to 8	12 to 11	15 to 14	17 to 17	17 to 17	Less than Total	3 to 3	6 to 5	9 to 8	12 to 11	15 to 14	17 to 17	
	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,895</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>609</b>	<b>1,300</b>	<b>1,655</b>	<b>9,877</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>27,018</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>1,365</b>			
Family <sup>3</sup>	9,577	83	159	179	205	267	272	3,405	19	87	77	87	90	60	6,172	64	72	102	118	177	212			
Friend/acquaintance <sup>4</sup>	16,716	20	78	124	250	681	794	4,336	7	57	61	73	173	144	12,380	13	21	63	176	508	650			
Stranger	5,774	7	12	32	77	192	349	1,114	1	6	11	19	41	52	4,660	6	6	21	57	151	297			
Unknown <sup>5</sup>	4,828	16	29	42	78	161	240	1,022	2	16	20	19	31	34	3,806	14	12	23	59	130	206			

1. 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.
2. 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. Includes spouse, ex-spouse, parent, sibling and extended family.
4. Includes any relationship in which the accused and the victim are familiar with each other, but are not related, or in a legal guardianship relationship.
5. Includes cases where the relationship between the victim and the accused is unknown.

**Notes:** Children and youth include all those under the age of 18. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collected data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. 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.

Table 2.4

**Age of victim and type of assault against children and youth by family members, reported to a subset of police services 2005**

Relationship of accused to victim	Total		Less than 3	3 to 5	6 to 8	9 to 11	12 to 14	15 to 17
	number	rate				rate		
<b>Family assault - total</b>	<b>9,577</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>272</b>
Parent <sup>1</sup>	5,767	163	68	100	116	120	165	137
Sibling <sup>2</sup>	2,027	57	8	30	29	49	63	64
Extended family <sup>3</sup>	1,448	41	7	29	34	35	35	37
Spouse <sup>4</sup>	335	9	0	0	0	0	4	34
<b>Family sexual assault<sup>5</sup> - total</b>	<b>3,405</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>60</b>
Parent <sup>1</sup>	1,388	39	11	39	30	29	37	26
Sibling <sup>2</sup>	1,013	29	5	24	20	31	28	15
Extended family <sup>3</sup>	971	27	3	24	26	26	23	17
Spouse <sup>4</sup>	33	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
<b>Family physical assault<sup>6</sup> - total</b>	<b>6,172</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>212</b>
Parent <sup>1</sup>	4,379	124	57	61	86	91	128	112
Sibling <sup>2</sup>	1,014	29	3	6	9	18	34	49
Extended family <sup>3</sup>	477	13	4	5	7	9	12	20
Spouse <sup>4</sup>	302	9	0	0	0	0	2	32

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

1. Includes a small number of cases where age or the relationship between the accused and the victim may have been miscoded.

2. Includes natural, step, half, foster or adopted siblings.

3. Includes others related by blood, marriage, adoption or foster care.

4. Include legally married and common-law partners and ex-spouses. Rates are calculated per 100,000 population for the geographic areas policed by the UCR2 respondents.

Population counts by marital status are not available for this geographic level.

5. 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. 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.

**Notes:** Children and youth include all those under the age of 18. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown. Data are not nationally representative.

The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collected data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. 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.

Table 2.5

**Child and youth victims of physical and sexual assault committed by family or non-family members, by level of injury, reported to a subset of police services, 2005**

Level of injury	Total assault victims						Sexual assault <sup>1</sup> victims				Physical assault <sup>2</sup> victims			
	Total		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Offences committed by family members</b>														
<b>Assault - total</b>	<b>9,577</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,847</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3,730</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,658</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3,189</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,983</b>	<b>100</b>
Unknown	1,237	13	798	14	439	12	507	19	136	18	291	9	303	10
No injuries <sup>3</sup>	4,748	50	3,104	53	1,644	44	1,866	70	545	73	1,238	39	1,099	37
Minor physical injury <sup>4</sup>	3,404	36	1,848	32	1,561	42	235	9	57	8	1,608	50	1,504	50
Major physical injury <sup>5</sup>	110	1	43	1	67	2	6	0	1	0	37	1	66	2
Death	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Applicable <sup>6</sup>	78	1	59	1	19	1	44	2	8	1	15	0	11	0
<b>Offences committed by non-family members</b>														
<b>Assault - total</b>	<b>27,318</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>12,508</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14,810</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5,194</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,278</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>7,314</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>13,532</b>	<b>100</b>
Unknown	2,247	8	1,283	10	964	7	806	16	216	17	477	7	748	6
No injuries <sup>3</sup>	12,690	46	6,631	53	6,059	41	3,728	72	942	74	2,903	40	5,117	38
Minor physical injury <sup>4</sup>	11,543	42	4,332	35	7,211	49	533	10	83	6	3,799	52	7,128	53
Major physical injury <sup>5</sup>	590	2	97	1	493	3	7	0	2	0	90	1	491	4
Death	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Applicable <sup>6</sup>	248	1	165	1	83	1	120	2	35	3	45	1	48	0

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

- Includes sexual assault (level 1), sexual assault with a weapon (level 2), aggravated sexual assault (level 3) and the other sexual crimes category which includes sexual interference, sexual touching, sexual exploitation, incest, etc.
- 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.
- 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.
- Minor physical injury is an injury that required no professional medical treatment or only some first injury aid (e.g., band aid, ice, etc.).
- Major physical injury is an injury that required professional medical attention at the scene or transportation to a medical facility.
- The violation did not involve the use of weapons nor physical force against victim.

**Notes:** Children and youth include all those under the age of 18. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the age of the victim was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collected data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. 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.

Table 2.6

**Parent victims of violent crime committed by a son or daughter, by sex, reported to a subset of police services, 2005**

	Total		Mother		Father	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,634</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,797</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>32</b>
Daughter	676	26	563	31	113	14
Son	1,958	74	1,234	69	724	86

**Notes:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Includes only incidents involving a single victim and a single accused. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or the relationship between the accused and the victim was unknown. Data are not nationally representative. The Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey collected data from 122 police services representing 71% of the national volume of crime in 2005. Mother and father include victims over the age of 18 where the relationship between the victim and accused was known to be their child. Includes biological offspring of the victim or the victim has another legal relationship to the accused (e.g., adoption). Includes all crimes against the person. Daughter and son excludes accused over the age of 30.

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

Table 2.7

**Family-related homicides against children and youth by method, Canada, 1996 to 2005**

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	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>100</b>
Strangulation, suffocation or drowning	92	23	30	27	26	22	17	31	8	17	11	15
Beating	78	20	27	25	35	30	9	17	4	9	3	4
Shooting	64	16	1	1	9	8	8	15	17	36	29	40
Stabbing	53	13	5	5	12	10	7	13	12	26	17	24
Shaken Baby Syndrome <sup>2</sup>	50	13	33	30	17	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
Poisoning or lethal injection	17	4	1	1	3	3	7	13	1	2	5	7
Fire (smoke inhalation, burns)	19	5	1	1	6	5	4	7	3	6	5	7
Other <sup>3</sup>	27	7	12	11	9	8	2	4	2	4	2	3

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

1. Excludes 6 homicides for which method used to cause death was unknown.

2. Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) 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.

## 3.0 Family violence against older adults<sup>1,2</sup>

by Hannah McGeachie

Seniors (those aged 65 years and older) currently account for 14% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2007). The senior population is expected to exceed the population of those under 15 years of age by 2015 (Bélanger et al., 2005); this will mark the first time in Canadian history that seniors outnumber children. This rate will continue to grow over the coming decades, reaching nearly one quarter (24%) of the population by 2031.

As a result of the growing senior population, there are numerous implications for Canadian society, including meeting seniors' health and caregiving needs. In addition, the need to quantify and understand the extent and nature of victimization of older adults has become increasingly important.

Senior abuse can take many forms including emotional or psychological abuse, neglect or maltreatment, material exploitation or financial abuse, physical assault and sexual assault. The World Health Organization defines senior abuse as a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust or where a person is in a position of power or authority (World Health Organization and International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, 2002).

Previous research has attempted to understand the issue of senior abuse. Explanations range from decreased physical and mental abilities of the senior attributable to the aging process to the caregiver stress model which focuses on difficulties in balancing conflicting roles and responsibilities including helping elderly relatives, raising children, working at paid employment and maintaining personal relationships (Bergeron, 2001; Hogstel & Curry, 1999). Researchers have also suggested that individuals who abuse seniors may have learned this behaviour through either witnessing or suffering abuse themselves. Other explanations for senior abuse look to the perpetrators' characteristics, dependencies between abusers and their senior victims, negative societal attitudes, discrimination against older adults, and a history of spousal abuse that continues into old age (Dessin, 2000; Lachs and Pillemer, 2004; Swanson, 1998; Wilke and Vinton, 2003; Wolf, 2000). In many cases, a combination of these factors may be responsible for abuse inflicted on seniors.

This chapter begins with a look at violence against seniors in general, followed by an examination of family-inflicted

### How violence against seniors was measured

This chapter examines police-reported violent crimes (physical assault, sexual assault, robbery, criminal harassment, uttering threats, and other violent violations) and homicides committed against seniors aged 65 years and older.

Violent crime against seniors is measured through data reported by a national non-representative subset of 122 police services reporting to the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey. This subset of police forces represented 71% of the population of Canada in 2005.

The extent and nature of homicides committed against seniors is measured using data from the Homicide Survey, which collects information from the police on all homicide incidents, victims and accused persons in Canada.

An analysis of police-reported violence represents only a portion of the violence against seniors since not all incidents of victimization are reported to the police, nor do the police capture data on emotional or psychological abuse perpetrated against seniors.

violence against seniors. The nature, prevalence and consequences of family violence against seniors are measured using police-reported data from the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

### 3.1 Violence against seniors

#### Seniors have the lowest risk of victimization of any age group

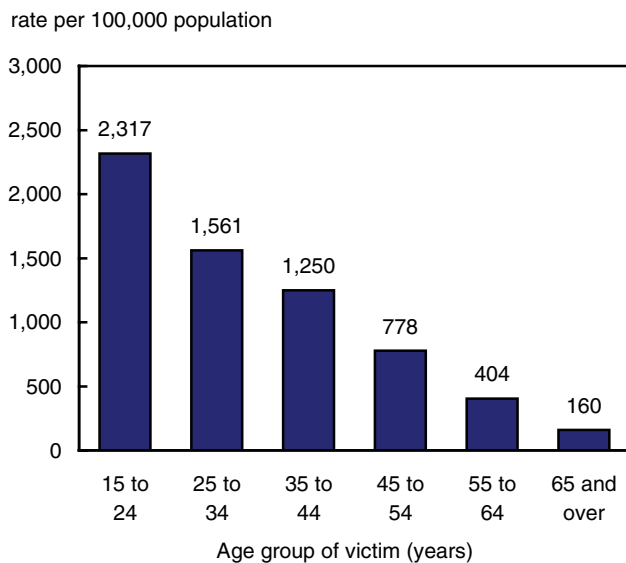
Police-reported data have consistently shown that persons 65 years of age and over are the least likely age group to be criminally victimized. This pattern continues to hold true in 2005. Overall, seniors represented 2% of all victims of violent offences in 2005. This represents 4,808 police-recorded incidents of violence committed against seniors, or a rate of 160 violent incidents for every 100,000 seniors.

1. Throughout this section, the terms 'seniors', 'elderly persons' and 'older adults' are used interchangeably and refer to persons aged 65 years and older.
2. For a broader perspective on seniors as victims of crime, including fear of crime and perceptions of the criminal justice system, see the Profile series, *Seniors as victims of crime 2004 and 2005*, Catalogue no. 85F0033MIE, No. 014.



This rate was 2.5 times lower than that of the second oldest segment of the population, those aged 55 to 64 (404 per 100,000), and almost 14 times lower than the rate recorded for persons aged 15 to 24 (2,317 per 100,000) (Figure 3.1).

**Figure 3.1**  
**Seniors have lowest rates of police-reported violence, 2005**



**Notes:** Data are not nationally representative. Based on a subset of 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005.

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

Trend data shows that between 1998 and 2005, the overall rate of police-reported violence against seniors increased 20%.<sup>3</sup> The rates increased between 1998 and 2000, declined for three years, and then increased again between 2003 and 2005.

### Male seniors experience higher levels of violence

According to police-reported data, senior males are more likely than senior females to be victims of violent crime. In 2005, senior men experienced rates of violent crime that were 1.5 times higher than for senior women (172 versus 114 per 100,000).<sup>4</sup> In comparison, males and females under 65 years of age were victimized at a similar rate (1,176 versus 1,170 per 100,000).

The most notable differences in violent victimization rates between male and female seniors were for major assault (levels 2 and 3)<sup>5</sup> (26 versus 12 per 100,000), uttering threats (42 versus 22 per 100,000) and common assault (level 1) (77 versus 48 per 100,000). The only violent offence for which senior females experienced higher rates than males was for sexual assault (6 versus less than 1 per 100,000).

### Common assault most commonly committed offence against senior victims

Common assault (level 1) was the most frequently committed offence against seniors (53 per 100,000), followed by robbery (27 per 100,000) and uttering threats (26 per 100,000). For all offence types, the rates of violence against seniors were lower when the accused was a family member compared to a non-family member (42 versus 97 per 100,000) (Table 3.1).

### Most senior victims know their perpetrator

Similar to all victims of crime, police-reported data show that senior victims are more likely to experience violence at the hands of someone they know (88 per 100,000) than a stranger (51 per 100,000). Of perpetrators known to the victim, friends or acquaintances are the most common, followed by their adult children and current or former spouses. Seniors are less likely than their younger counterparts to have been victimized by a stranger (51 compared to 318 per 100,000), a family member (42 compared to 279 per 100,000), or a friend or an acquaintance (38 compared to 431 per 100,000).

## 3.2 Family violence against older adults

### Senior women experience higher rates of family-inflicted abuse

While the most recent police-reported data found that overall rates of violence were higher for senior men compared to senior women (172 versus 114)<sup>6</sup>, when considering family relationships, rates of violence were higher for senior women. There were 47 per 100,000 females over 65 who were violently victimized by a family member, compared to 36 per 100,000 males over 65 (Table 3.2).

### Most family violence against seniors is committed by an adult child

According to police-reported data, rates of family violence against seniors were highest when the accused was an adult child (15 per 100,000) or a current or former spouse (13 per 100,000) (Figure 3.2). In comparison, victims under 65 years of age experienced higher rates when the accused was their spouse (167 per 100,000), followed by a parent (42 per 100,000) or sibling (28 per 100,000). These

3. The information from the UCR2 Trend Database is based on data from 62 police services representing 51% of the population in Canada in 2005. Since the Trend Database represents a smaller portion of the population than the UCR2 for 2005, the rates are not comparable.

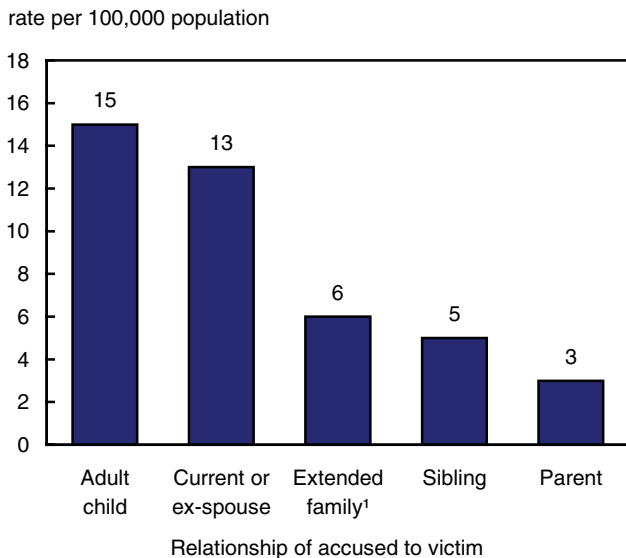
4. Excludes incidents where the victim's sex, age and/or relationship to the accused were unknown. If incidents where the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator was unknown were included, the rates would rise to 200 victimizations per 100,000 senior males and 131 victimizations per 100,000 senior females.

5. Assault level 2 includes assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm and assault level 3 includes aggravated assault.

6. Excludes incidents where the age or sex of the victim was unknown, or when the victim's relationship to the perpetrator was unknown.

differences may be due to seniors outliving their spouses and parents.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 3.2**  
**Most family violence against seniors is committed by the seniors' children or spouses**



1. Includes aunts, uncles, cousins, sisters/brothers-in-law, etc.  
**Notes:** Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. Excludes incidents where the victim's sex, age and/or relationship of the accused to the victim was unknown.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

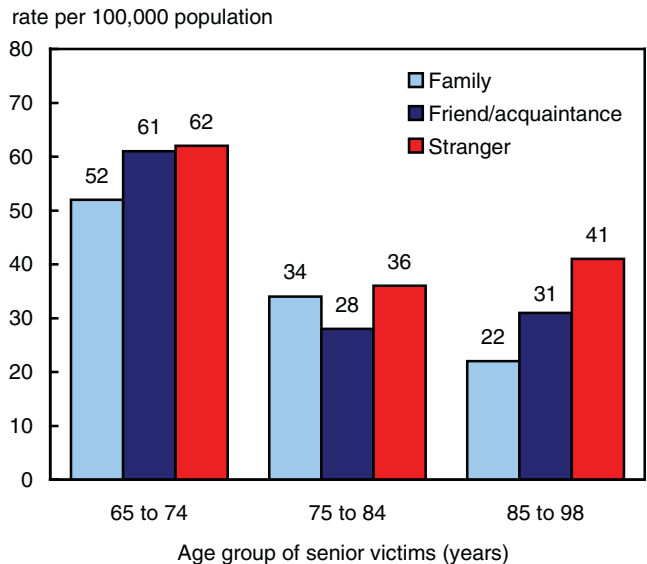
Senior females were most likely to experience family violence at the hands of their current or ex-spouse (17 per 100,000) or their adult children (16 per 100,000); while senior males were more likely to be victimized by their adult children (13 per 100,000) (Table 3.2).

**Older seniors experience lower rates of family violence**

Police-reported data show that the oldest seniors are less likely to be victims of family violence (Figure 3.3). The rate of family violence against seniors aged 85 and over was lowest at 22 per 100,000, compared to 34 for seniors between 75 and 84 years of age, and 52 for the youngest seniors aged 65 to 74 years of age.

Seniors aged 85 and over were 6 times less likely to be victimized by their spouse and half as likely to be victimized by a sibling or extended family member than the youngest group of seniors (those aged 65 to 74). The oldest seniors group (aged 85 years and older) also experienced the lowest rate of victimization by an adult child at a rate of 8 per 100,000, which was half the rate of the youngest group of seniors, aged 65 to 74 years (17 per 100,000).

**Figure 3.3**  
**Older seniors experience lower rates of family violence**



**Notes:** Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. Excludes incidents where victims sex, age and/or relationship of the accused to the victim was unknown.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey.

Studies have suggested that older seniors are more likely to be victimized by family than younger seniors, but due to their increased dependence on family, they are unable to report the abuse for fear of losing support (Wolf, 1997). Research has also found that those over 85 years of age are most likely to suffer from dementia or other chronic illnesses. These conditions can render an individual physically and/or mentally incapable of reporting violence to the police (Welfel et Al., 2000). Spousal violence accounts for a significant proportion of family violence and so lowering rates of spousal violence among the oldest seniors may be due in part to women outliving an abusive partner (Jagger and Matthews, 2002; Statistics Canada, 2006).

**Majority of senior victims of family violence sustained no physical injuries**

Similar to other violent crime, police-reported data show that over half of family violence (53%) and non-family violence (60%) incidents against seniors resulted in no physical injuries to the victim. This may be because the offence committed against seniors most frequently is common assault (level 1), which is considered the least serious form of assault. Senior victims of family violence sustained minor

7. According to the 2001 Census, a rate of 75,653 seniors per 100,000 were legally married, in a common-law relationship or separated but still legally married, comparable to the rate for non-seniors (15-64 years) (79,987).

injuries (requiring no professional medical treatment or only some first aid) in 37% of incidents; this was true for 32% of non-family related violence against seniors. Two percent of incidents of family violence against seniors resulted in major physical injuries<sup>8</sup> and 1% in death (Table 3.3). There was little difference between male and female senior victims in the type or frequency of injuries they sustained due to violence.

When senior victims of family violence sustained an injury, three-quarters (76%) of the injuries resulted from the aggressor's use of physical force. Weapons caused injury in 16% of family-related incidents against seniors. The most common types of weapons used against seniors were knives or other piercing instruments (5%), clubs or blunt instruments (5%) and other weapons<sup>9</sup> (5%). Firearms were rarely used (less than 1%) in violent incidents committed by family members against seniors (Table 3.4).

Senior women were slightly more likely to be harmed by physical force than senior men (78% versus 71%), while senior men were more likely to be injured by a weapon than senior women (21% versus 13%). However, there was little difference between the sexes in the type of weapon used (Table 3.4).

### 3.3 Family-related homicides against older adults

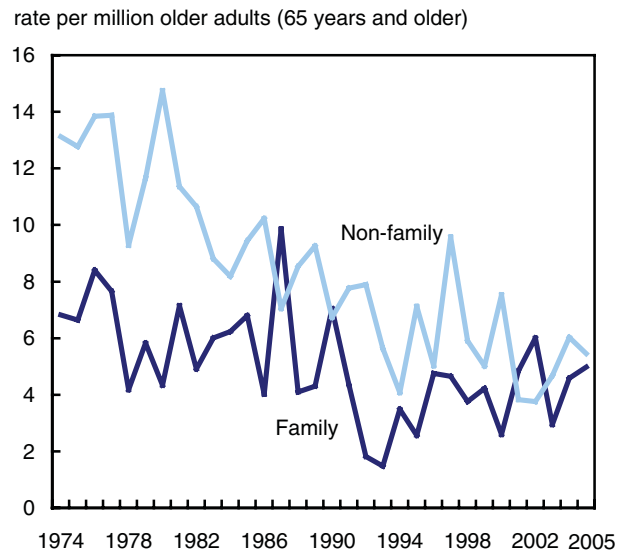
by Hannah McGeachie

Consistent with data which show that older Canadians are the least likely to experience non-lethal violence, data from the Homicide Survey indicate that the rate of homicide is lower among older adults compared to those under 65 years of age. Homicides against seniors represented 7% of all homicides in Canada in 2005, for a total of 49 homicides (25 males and 24 females). This translates to a rate of 1.16 homicides per 100,000 seniors, a rate that is slightly lower than that for the next oldest age group, 55 to 64 year olds (1.3), and 3 times lower than the rate for 15 to 24 year olds (3.58).

In 2005, four in ten (44%) homicides against seniors were committed by a family member. Another one-third (31%) of senior homicide victims were killed by an acquaintance and a further 17% by a stranger. The remaining 8% of homicides were unsolved.<sup>10</sup>

Over the past three decades, the rate of family-related homicide against seniors has been lower than that of non-family-related homicide (Figure 3.4). Since 1980, the rate of family-related homicide has stayed relatively stable; in comparison, non-family-related homicide rate has been declining steadily since peaking in 1980.

**Figure 3.4**  
**Gap narrowing between rates of family and non-family homicides against seniors, 1974 to 2005**



**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.

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

According to the Homicide Survey, 63% of senior female homicide victims were killed by a family member compared to 29% of senior male victims. Senior female victims killed by a family member were most often killed by their spouse (37%) or adult son<sup>11</sup> (37%). In comparison, senior male victims killed by family members were most likely to be killed by an adult son or step-son (57%) (Figure 3.5).

#### Four in ten homicides against seniors involve a history of family violence

Similar to homicides committed against spouses and children by a family member, there is often a history of family violence present in family-related homicides against seniors. Between 1996 and 2005, four in ten (41%) homicides committed against seniors by family members involved at least one prior incident of violence.

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

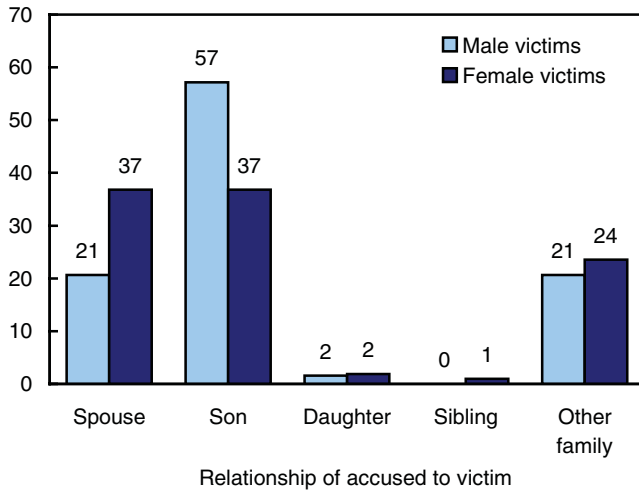
9. Other weapons include explosives, fire, motor vehicles or poison.

10. Excludes one homicide for which the relationship between the victim and accused was unknown.

11. Includes step-sons.

**Figure 3.5**  
**Seniors most likely to be killed by spouses and adult sons, 1996 to 2005**

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



0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

**Notes:** Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding. Other family includes grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, cousins and any other family member related by blood, marriage or adoption.

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

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

According to the Homicide Survey, half (50%) of those persons accused of committing family-related homicides against seniors were suspected by police to have been suffering from a psychological or developmental disorder (such as dementia, schizophrenia or depression).<sup>12</sup>

Spouses accused of killing their senior partner were almost 2.5 times less likely than other family members to be suspected of having a mental disorder (25% versus 62%). Male family members accused of killing a senior were more frequently suspected of having a mental disorder than their female counterparts (52% versus 33%).

One in five (20%) family-related homicides against seniors ended in the suicide of the accused. About three-quarters (76%) of these homicide-suicides were committed against senior females, most of whom were killed by their spouses (54%).

12. This information is based on 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, this information should be interpreted with caution.

Table 3.1

**Older adult (65 years and over) victims of violent crime by offence type and relationship to accused, reported to a subset of police services, 2005**

Offence type	Violent offences committed by family members								Violent offences committed by non-family members					
	Total victims		Total		Female		Male		Total		Female		Male	
	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate
Homicide/attempts	49	2	26	1	15	1	11	1	23	1	8	0	15	1
Sexual assault (levels 1, 2, 3)	88	3	12	0	11	1	1	0	76	3	74	4	2	0
Major assault (levels 2 and 3)	475	16	196	7	110	6	86	7	279	9	68	4	211	16
Common assault (level 1)	1,592	53	642	21	427	25	215	17	950	32	316	18	634	49
Robbery	799	27	14	0	9	1	5	0	785	26	398	23	387	30
Criminal harassment	207	7	59	2	41	2	18	1	148	5	77	4	71	6
Uttering threats	793	26	282	9	163	9	119	9	511	17	167	10	344	27
Other violent offences <sup>1</sup>	156	5	35	1	28	2	7	1	121	4	42	2	79	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,167</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2,900</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>1,155</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>1,745</b>	<b>136</b>

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

1. Includes arson, other assaults, assault against a peace/public officer, criminal negligence causing bodily harm, discharge firearm with intent, extortion, kidnapping, unlawfully causing bodily harm, and other violent offences.

**Notes:** Includes family and non-family violence against victims aged 65 years and older. Excludes incidents where the victim's sex, age and/or relationship to the accused was unknown. Rate per 100,000 population for the geographic areas policed by the UCR2 respondents, based on populations provided by Demography Division, Statistics Canada. Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population in Canada in 2005.

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

Table 3.2

**Senior (65 years and over) victims of violent crime by sex and relationship to accused, reported to a subset of police services, 2005**

Relationship of accused to victim	Total		Female		Male	
	number	rate	number	rate	number	rate
Known to the victim	2,648	88	1,310	76	1,338	104
Strangers	1,519	51	649	39	870	68
<b>Total family</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>36</b>
Spouse/ex-spouse	392	13	288	17	104	8
Parent	102	3	53	3	49	4
Child	443	15	271	16	172	13
Sibling	143	5	84	5	59	5
Extended family <sup>1</sup>	187	6	108	6	79	6
<b>Friends, acquaintances, others</b>	<b>1,381</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>68</b>
Friend or acquaintance <sup>2</sup>	1,145	38	433	25	712	56
Business relationship	226	8	70	4	156	12
Criminal relationship	10	0	3	0	7	1
<b>Total violence against older adults</b>	<b>4,167</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>1,959</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>172</b>

0 true zero or value rounded to zero

1. Includes aunts, uncles, cousins, sisters/brothers-in-law, etc.

2. Includes friends, boy/girlfriends and casual acquaintances.

**Notes:** 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 122 police services representing 71% of the population in Canada in 2005. Includes family violence and non-family violence against victims aged 65 years and over. 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.

**Table 3.3****Level of injury by sex and relationship of older adult (65 years and over) victims, reported to a subset of police services, 2005**

Level of injury	Violent offences committed by family members								Violent offences committed by non-family members					
	Total victims		Total		Female		Male		Total		Female		Male	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Unknown	262	6	85	7	52	6	33	7	177	6	70	6	107	6
No injuries <sup>1</sup>	2,402	58	675	53	433	54	242	52	1,727	60	708	61	1,019	58
Minor physical injuries <sup>2</sup>	1,388	33	464	37	294	37	170	37	924	32	350	30	574	33
Major physical injuries <sup>3</sup>	83	2	28	2	16	2	12	3	55	2	18	2	37	2
Death	32	1	15	1	9	1	6	1	17	1	9	1	8	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,167</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,267</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>804</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2,900</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,155</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,745</b>	<b>100</b>

0 true zero or a 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.

2. Minor physical injuries require no professional medical treatment or only some first aid.

3. Major physical injuries require professional medical attention at the scene or transportation to a medical facility.

**Notes:** Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Excludes incidents where the victim's sex, age and/or relationship between the accused and the victim was unknown.

Data are not nationally representative. Based on data from 122 police services representing 71% of the population in Canada in 2005. Includes family and non-family violence against victims aged 65 years and older.

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

**Table 3.4****Method of violence causing most serious injury to the victim in family violence against older adults (aged 65 years and over), reported to a subset of police services, 2005**

Method of violence	Total			Female			Male		
	number	%	rate	number	%	rate	number	%	rate
<b>Total</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>
Unknown or no weapon <sup>1</sup>	50	8	2	33	9	2	17	8	1
Physical force	449	76	15	291	78	17	158	71	12
Weapon	94	16	3	48	13	3	46	21	4
Knife/other piercing instrument	32	5	1	17	5	1	15	7	1
Club/blunt instrument	31	5	1	14	4	1	17	8	1
Other weapon <sup>2</sup>	31	5	1	17	4	1	14	6	1
Not applicable <sup>3</sup>	674	0	22	432	0	25	242	0	19

0 true zero or a value rounded to zero

1. The weapon used in this incident was not known.

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

3. No weapon was involved in the incident, or the weapon involved did not cause any injuries.

**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 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada in 2005. 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.

## Data sources

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### 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 2005, detailed data were collected from 122 police services representing 71% of the population of Canada. 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 62 police services that have reported to the UCR2 survey constantly since 1998. These respondents accounted for 51% of the population of Canada in 2005.

### 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 people aged 15 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. Over 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 investigation 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 on 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 and the attempted suicide of the accused. However, generalizations cannot be made to all homicides, since the availability of this supplementary information varies between homicide reports.

## Methodology

### UCR2 Linked Database

The study examines spousal homicides and attempted spousal homicides reported to police over a 3-year period (2003 to 2005), in conjunction with prior incidents of spousal violence committed by the accused dating back to 1995. The data source for this analysis is an 11-year composite file from the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey. This survey captures detailed information on individual criminal incidents reported to police, including characteristics of the victims and characteristics of accused persons.

Using police-reported data from the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR2) Survey, criminal incident records for the same individuals were linked over eleven reporting years: 1995 to 2005.

### Coverage

#### Geographic coverage

Coverage for the UCR2 11-year linked file includes 61 police services predominantly in urban areas in 6 provinces for the study period 1995 through 2005. Police services included in this subset are 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	Kingston
Miramichi	Windsor
Rothesay Regional	York Regional
B.N.P.P. Regional <sup>1</sup>	Prince Albert
Peel Regional	Regina
Brantford	Saskatoon
London	Calgary
Niagara Regional	Edmonton
Stratford	Lethbridge
Waterloo Regional	Vancouver

39 police services in Quebec including Montreal and Quebec City

Because the study focuses on selected urban areas in 6 provinces, it is not a representative sample of spousal homicides, attempted spousal homicides or 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 61 police services that consistently reported to the UCR2 survey during the 11-year time frame. Combined, these police services represent 52% of the population of Canada in 2005. 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 11-year linked file are therefore not geographically representative either at the national or provincial levels. Nevertheless, the 11-year linked data file includes a large enough proportion of all police-reported crimes in Canada that parameters of spousal homicide, attempted spousal homicide and prior contact with the police for spousal abuse would unlikely be biased in comparison with the national picture.

Due to incomplete coverage of the UCR2 survey, there is potential for spousal homicide offenders to have had contact with police for spousal abuse 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 11-year period.

### Reference period

An 11-year time frame, 1995 to 2005 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.

1. B.N.P.P. Regional represents the police services of Beresford, Nigadoo, Pointe-Verte and Petit Rocher.



### 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 code, date of birth, sex and province of offence. 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., many 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 code of 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.
- A subset of the UCR2 11-year linked data file is used which includes only persons identified as a current or ex-spouse (including legally married, common-law, separated and divorced partners), aged 15 to 98 years of age.
- Excluded are incidents where the sex of the victim or the relationship to the accused was unknown.
- Additional programming was required in order to create the three sub-groups for spousal violence offenders (i.e., one-time, repeat and chronic) since these categories are not routinely captured by the UCR2 survey. These sub-groups are based on the number of prior incidents of spousal violence that were reported to police during the 11 years under examination.

- To assess changes in the severity of repeated spousal violence reported to police, a basic 4-level scale was constructed to differentiate between offences of different degrees of seriousness. The categories are based on the maximum penalty for specific violent offences as indicated in the *Criminal Code*. A value ranging from 1 to 4 was assigned to each violent offence: a value of 1 indicates the least severe offences up to a value of 4 indicating the most severe 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 6 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 11-year time frame of the study, 1995 through 2005.
- The reader is also cautioned regarding the composition of the spousal violence categories in that they may not be exclusive. For example, a spousal homicide offender coded as having a single police contact may in fact have committed repeated acts of spousal abuse either prior to or during the reference period, but only came to the attention of police a single time during the 11-year time frame under analysis. This precaution can also be applied to the ‘repeat’ spousal violence category. Theoretically, spousal homicide offenders coded as having ‘repeated contacts 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 11-year time frame.

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

<b>Violation code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Maximum penalty</b>
1110	Murder 1 <sup>st</sup> degree	
1120	Murder 2 <sup>nd</sup> 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.

**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.

**Cleared otherwise**, Alternatively, police may describe the status of a criminal incident as 'cleared otherwise' indicating that at least one suspect has been identified and that there is sufficient evidence to lay a charge, but for one of the following reasons, the suspect is processed by other means including: suicide of accused, death of accused, death of witness/complainant, diplomatic immunity, the accused is less than 12 years of age, committal of accused to mental hospital, accused in foreign country, the complainant declined to lay charges, accused involved in other criminal incidents, the accused was already sentenced, departmental discretion, diversionary program or other reasons beyond departmental control.

**Criminal harassment**, (section 264.1) is defined as repeatedly following another person from place to place or repeatedly attempting to contact the person against their wishes causing that person to reasonably fear for their personal safety or the safety of anyone known to them.

**Family and non-family** - The nature of the relationship between the victim and the accused is determined by establishing the identity of the accused relative 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 results in wounding, maiming, disfiguring or endangering the life of the victim.
- **Other sexual offences** include 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) – is 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) – is the 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) – occurs 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) – occurs 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. Includes same-sex ex-partners/ of homosexual relationships.

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