

Supplemental Material

Tab #8: Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is more common than many people may realize and causes significant short- and long-term emotional, physical, social and financial issues for many Canadians. While statistics alone cannot explain how an individual actually experiences the abuse, the data do help identify the prevalence, incidents, common characteristics of victims and offenders, and the direct and indirect impacts of IPV.

1. While both women and men self-report experiencing IPV, there are differences in the type, severity, frequency and impacts of abuse they experience

Statistics indicate that:⁵⁶

- ▶ More than four in ten (44%) women and one-third (36%) of men indicated that they were victims of IPV in their lifetime. However, within three broad categories of IPV – psychological, physical and sexual abuse – significantly higher proportions of women than men experience violence.
- ▶ Women also disproportionately experience the most severe forms of IPV, such as being sexually assaulted, choked, and assaulted or threatened with a weapon. They are more likely to receive threats to harm or kill them or someone close to them, be confined or locked in a room or other space, be made to perform sex acts they did not want to perform, and be harassed or stalked.
- ▶ Women are more likely to experience more frequent instances of violence and multiple specific abusive behaviours, and they more often report injury and negative physical and emotional consequences as a result of the violence.
- ▶ Women report fear at a higher rate than men do: 37% of women who were IPV victims reported being afraid of a partner, while 9% of men did.
- ▶ Women are also more likely than men to report feeling controlled or trapped by an abusive partner (43% of women and 36% of men).
- ▶ Police-reported crime statistics also demonstrate the gendered nature of IPV. For example, in 2019, almost 8 out of 10 (79%) victims of police-reported IPV were women.⁵⁷

2. Impacts of intersecting identity factors

Data show that some populations are more at risk of IPV than others. For example:

- ▶ Indigenous women (61%) and men (54%) are more likely to have been victims of IPV in their lifetime than their non-Indigenous counterparts (44% and 36% respectively).⁵⁸
- ▶ Indigenous women are also almost twice as likely as non-Indigenous women to experience physical abuse (42%) and sexual abuse (21%) by an intimate partner, when compared to non-Indigenous women (22% and 11%). A significantly higher proportion of Indigenous women experience psychological abuse in their lifetime (60%) compared with non-Indigenous women (42%). Indigenous women are almost three times more likely than non-Indigenous women to experience financial abuse.⁵⁹
- ▶ Women with disabilities are more likely than women without disabilities to experience psychological abuse (53% vs. 36%), physical assault (32% vs. 17%) and sexual assault (18% vs. 7%) by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Men with disabilities also report a higher prevalence of experiencing IPV (44%) than men without disabilities (32%).⁶⁰
- ▶ More than half of sexual minority men (54%) and women (67%) report having experienced IPV in their lifetime, a much higher prevalence than reported by heterosexual men (36%) and women (44%). Sexual minority men and women are also significantly more likely to experience some of the most severe IPV behaviours, such as being choked or being made to perform sex acts that they did not want to perform.⁶¹

For some victims, intersecting identity factors can not only increase the risk of IPV, but also create additional challenges in deciding whether to leave or stay in an abusive relationship. In fact, some populations are more vulnerable to IPV not because they are abused more often, but because when they are abused, they face greater barriers in gaining access to the resources and supports they need.⁶² For instance, victims of IPV who live in rural communities are more likely to feel isolated or trapped due to the remoteness and lower availability of community services.⁶³

3. Intimate partner homicide⁶⁴

Between 2014 and 2019, there were 497 victims of intimate partner homicide. The large majority of victims were women (80%). Of these female victims, 75% were killed by a current or former spouse or common-law partner and 25% were killed by their non-spousal intimate partner, such as a current or former boyfriend or girlfriend. Male victims of intimate partner homicide were also more likely to be killed by a current or former spouse or common-law partner (65%) than a non-spousal partner (35%). From 1997 to 2016, women represented 18% (or 323) of those accused of intimate partner homicide and men represented 82% (or 1,480).⁶⁵ While the research-documented indicators of the potential for intimate partner homicides are complex, between 2008 and 2018, six in ten (60%) intimate partner homicides involved a known history of family violence.⁶⁶

4. The period around separation or divorce is a time of heightened risk for abuse

IPV often continues after the relationship ends and can intensify when the abuser perceives their partner is thinking about leaving. Risk can also increase when circumstances change, such as when the victim enters a new intimate relationship, or if the abuser loses their job or experiences changes to their mental health (e.g. suicidal thoughts, depression).⁶⁷

According to 2019 self-reported data, 45% of victims of spousal violence indicated that they suffered abuse after their relationship with their ex-spouse or partner had ended.⁶⁸ In addition, almost half of those who reported post-separation abuse in the 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization stated that the severity of the abuse increased after the relationship ended. Both men and women were likely to report this escalation following a separation.⁶⁹

The period right before and after separation is when victims of IPV are at the highest risk of being killed by their ex-partner. From 2007 to 2011, a woman's risk of being killed by a spouse she was separated from was nearly six times higher than the risk from a spouse with whom she was still living.⁷⁰ An Ontario Domestic Homicide Death Review conducted from 2003 and 2018 found that, out of 329 cases, 67% of homicides involved a couple with an actual or pending separation.⁷¹