



FACT SHEET: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls

Women and Girls are Harmed by Sexual Assault in Large Numbers

In 2020, AASAS released the findings of our Prevalence of Sexual Assault and Childhood Sexual Abuse in Alberta survey.¹

- 56% of women have experienced some type of sexual abuse in their lifetime.
 - 44% of girls have experienced sexual abuse under the age of 18.
 - 41% of women have experienced sexual assault over the age of 18.
 - Those who experience sexual abuse as a child are more likely to experience sexual assault again as an adult.

In Canada:

- Women make up the vast majority of people who are sexually assaulted (87%), particularly young women and girls.²
- Rates of police reported sexual offences were seven times higher for young women and girls than for boys and young men.³
- 80% of children being sexually exploited on-line in Canada are girls.⁴

Who Commits Sexual Assault?

- The majority of women know the person who sexually assaulted them. In over half of assaults, the person who harmed them was a friend, acquaintance, or neighbour.⁵
- The vast majority of people who commit sexual assault are male (98%).⁶

¹ Summary of Key Findings: Prevalence of Sexual Assault and Childhood Sexual Abuse in Alberta (2020). *Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services*.

² Rotenburg, C. (2017). *Police-reported sexual assaults in Canada, 2009-2014: A statistical profile [Data set]*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/54866-eng.htm>

³ Conroy, S., & A. Cotter. (2017). *Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014 [Data set]*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14842-eng.pdf?st=Hhk8zFBY>

⁴ Canadian Centre for Child Protection. (2016). *Child sexual abuse images on the internet: A Cybertip.ca analysis*. Retrieved from <https://protectchildren.ca/en/resources-research/child-sexual-abuse-images-report>

⁵ Department of Justice Canada. (2017). *Sexual Assault*. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/jf-pf/2017/may02.html>

⁶ Conroy, S. (2017). *Police-reported violence against girls and young women in Canada, 2017*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/181217/dq181217c-eng.htm>

Sexual Violence is Harmful

- Women are more likely to be physically injured, fear for their lives, and to have their daily lives disrupted as a result of sexual violence.⁷
- Sexual violence can result in significant consequences including physical injury, psychological difficulties such as depression, anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or suicidal ideation, sexual health problems, addictions, loss of work and difficulties in relationships.⁸

Indigenous Women are Sexually Assaulted at Higher Rates

- More than 1 in 5 young Indigenous women are sexually assaulted in Canada.⁹
- Indigenous women are more likely to experience multiple forms of violence, including sexual violence, as well as the most severe forms that result in serious physical injury and homicide.¹⁰
- Violence against Indigenous women must be placed in the context of colonization, racism, and sexism.¹¹

Women with Disabilities are Sexual Assaulted at Higher Rates

- Canadians with disabilities, particularly women, are at a greater risk for sexual violence.⁹
- Women with disabilities are more likely to experience multiple forms of violence, more often.¹²
- Women with disabilities have several additional barriers that increase their vulnerability. These include greater challenges leaving a violent situation, dependence on poor social services, and some may have communication difficulties. Overall women with disabilities are de-sexualized by society (and therefore disbelieved), and are perceived to lack credibility.¹¹

Bisexual and Lesbian Women are Sexually Assaulted at Higher Rates

- A 2010 prevalence study based in the United States found that the lifetime occurrence of sexual assault was 13.1% for lesbian women and 46.1% for bisexual women.¹³
- Most bisexual and heterosexual women (98.3% and 99.1%, respectively) who experienced sexual assault in their lifetime reported having only males who perpetrate.¹³

⁷ Sinha, M. (2013). *Measuring violence against women*. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf>

⁸ CDC. (2012). *Preventing sexual violence*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/fastfact.html>

⁹ Conroy, S., & A. Cotter. (2017). *Self-reported sexual assault in Canada, 2014* [Data set]. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2017001/article/14842-eng.pdf?st=Hhk8zFBY>

¹⁰ Brennan, S. (2011). *Violent victimization of Aboriginal women in the Canadian provinces, 2009* [Date set]. Retrieved from: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2011001/article/11439-eng.pdf>

¹¹ Benoit, C., Shumka, L., Phillips, R., Kennedy, M.C., & Belle-Isle, L. (2015). *Issue brief: Sexual violence against women in Canada*. Retrieved from <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/svawc-vcsfc/index-en.html>

¹² Odette, F. (2012). Sexual assault and disabled women ten years after Jane Doe. In E. Sheehy (Ed.), *Sexual assault in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa Press.

¹³ Walters, M., Chen, J., & Breiding, M. (2010). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Findings Based on Sexual Orientation, *National Center for Injury Prevention and Control Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*.

- Bisexual women are at a higher risk for sexual assault than heterosexual women in Canada.¹⁴
- Researchers theorize that the higher rates of violence are linked to homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism.¹¹

AASAS welcomes your suggestions and recommendations about other relevant Canadian research references that could be included on this handout. Please e-mail us at mailbox@aasas.ca

¹⁴ Simpson, L. (2018). *Violent victimization of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Canada, 2014* [Data set]. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54923-eng.htm>