

# 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.<sup>1</sup>

- 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.<sup>2</sup>
- Rates of police reported sexual offences were seven times higher for young women and girls than for boys and young men.<sup>3</sup>
- 80% of children being sexually exploited on-line in Canada are girls.<sup>4</sup>

### 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.<sup>5</sup>
- The vast majority of people who commit sexual assault are male (98%).<sup>6</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> 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>

<sup>3</sup> 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>

<sup>4</sup> 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>

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

<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>
- 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.<sup>8</sup>

## Indigenous Women are Sexually Assaulted at Higher Rates

- More than 1 in 5 young Indigenous women are sexually assaulted in Canada.<sup>9</sup>
- 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.<sup>10</sup>
- Violence against Indigenous women must be placed in the context of colonization, racism, and sexism.<sup>11</sup>

## Women with Disabilities are Sexual Assaulted at Higher Rates

- Canadians with disabilities, particularly women, are at a greater risk for sexual violence.<sup>8</sup>
- Women with disabilities are more likely to experience multiple forms of violence, more often.<sup>12</sup>
- 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.<sup>10</sup>

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

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

<sup>9</sup> 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>

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

<sup>11</sup> 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>

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

## **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.<sup>13</sup>
- Most bisexual and heterosexual women (98.3% and 99.1%, respectively) who experienced sexual assault in their lifetime reported having only males who perpetrate.<sup>12</sup>
- Bisexual women are at a higher risk for sexual assault than heterosexual women in Canada.<sup>14</sup>
- Researchers theorize that the higher rates of violence are linked to homophobia, transphobia and heterosexism.<sup>10</sup>

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](mailto:mailbox@aasas.ca)

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<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> 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>