

Survey on the national/regional situation around domestic and sexual violence

Medical Women's International Association

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Name of your country: Canada

Is domestic and sexual violence a problem in your country?

Yes

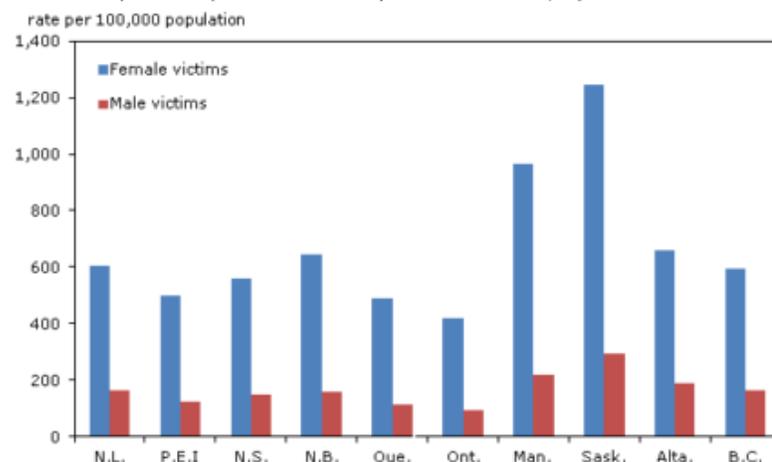
- In 2011, police reported 97,500 victims of intimate partner violence (341 victims/100,000 population)¹
- In 2007, police reported an estimated 24,200 sexual assaults. Since fewer than 1 in 10 sexual assaults are reported to police, this number is a significant underestimation of the true extent of the problem²

Who is affected by domestic and sexual violence in your country?

- *Females*
 - 69% of victims of family violence were female¹
 - Most pronounced for intimate partner violence, in which 80% of victims were female¹

Chart 1.5

Victims of police-reported intimate partner violence, by sex of victim and province, 2011



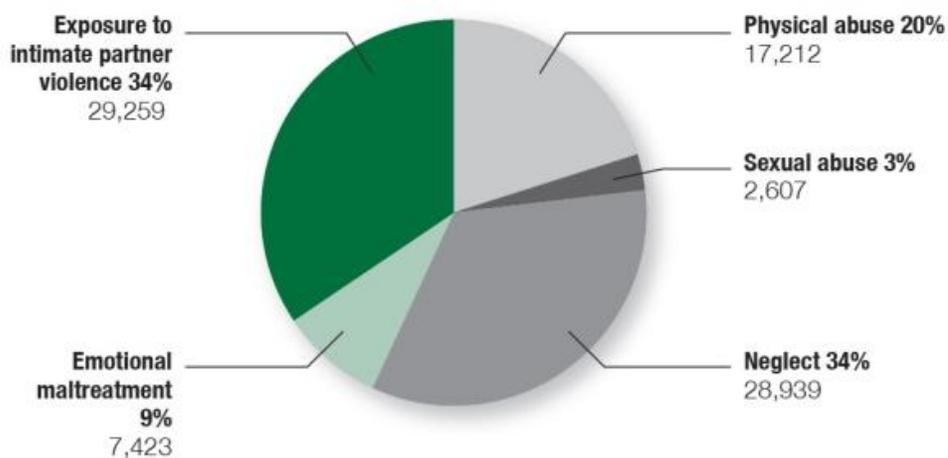
Note: Intimate partner violence refers to violence committed by legally married, separated, divorced, opposite and same sex common-law, dating partners (current and previous) and other intimate partners. Intimate partner category includes victims aged 15 to 89. Excludes incidents where the sex and/or age of the victim was unknown. Rates are calculated on the basis of 100,000 population.

³ **Source:** Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey.

- In spousal murder-suicides, 97% of accused were male¹
- Most common violent offences committed against women were:³
 - Common and serious assault (59%)
 - Uttering threats (13%)

- Sexual assault (7%)
 - Of the police-reported sexual assaults in Canada in 2009, 92% of victims were women³
- *Children*
 - In 2011, police reported 18,300 child victims of family violence (267 child victims/100,000 Canadians under age 18)¹
 - Girls experience higher rates of family violence for almost every type of violent offence, most marked for sexually-based offences¹
 - Estimated 85,440 substantiated child maltreatment investigations in Canada in 2008
 - Child maltreatment includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment and exposure to intimate partner violence

FIGURE 5: Primary Category of Substantiated Child Maltreatment in Canada in 2008*



Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect – 2008

* Total estimated number of substantiated investigations is 85,440, based on a sample of 6,163 substantiated investigations.

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- *Special populations:*
 - *Aboriginal people*
 - Aboriginal women
 - Are disproportionately represented as homicide victims³
 - Have higher rates of self-reported violence (both spousal and non-spousal)³
 - Aboriginal children
 - 22% of all substantiated cases of child maltreatment in Canada in 2008 involved children of Aboriginal heritage
 - *Seniors (aged 65 or older)*
 - 61 victims/100,000 population¹

- Most often grown children were responsible for family violence against seniors¹

What do you believe are the main factors related to domestic and sexual violence in your country? (E.g. unemployment, war, poverty, lack of education)

- Factors related to maltreatment of children
 - Major risk factors of the primary caregiver:⁴
 - A victim of intimate partner violence (46% of child maltreatment cases)
 - Few social supports (39%)
 - Mental health issues (27%)
 - Alcohol and drug abuse (21% and 17%, respectively)
 - Major household risk factor:⁴
 - Social assistance, employment insurance, or other benefits (33% of child maltreatment cases)

What has been done on a national level so far to prevent and eliminate domestic and sexual violence?

- Policies have been put in place to shift the burden of laying charges away from the victim of spousal violence and onto the police and crown³
- Key legislative changes have been enacted, including the introduction of the offence of criminal harassment in 1993³
- Domestic violence courts have been created to address the unique issues associated with spousal violence³
- The ministers in Atlantic Canada have joined forces to create Cybersafe Girl (<http://cybersafegirl.ca>). It is a public resource that provides information for girls, parents and educators about how to stay safe online⁵
- Since 1984, Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada have created and maintained a number of court-ordered treatment programs for men who have shown abusive behaviour³
- The Correctional Service of Canada offers programs for Aboriginal offenders that integrate their unique cultural and historical backgrounds⁶

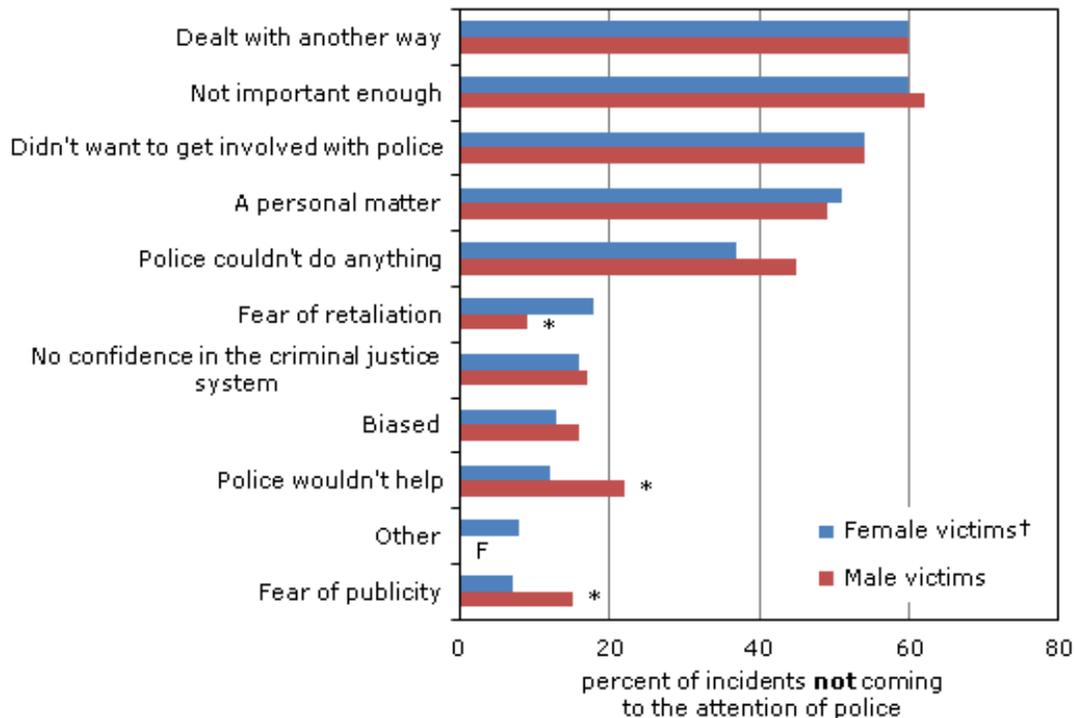
What has your national association done in the area of domestic and sexual violence?

- Dr. Shelley Ross of the Federation of Medical Women of Canada (FMWC) participated in this year's Canadian delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women to address ending violence against women
- The FMWC supports current government initiatives to improve supports for female victims of violence, and promotes awareness of the issue among all physicians

Why do you think interventions have not been successful in your country?

- In 2009, Statistics Canada conducted its most recent iteration of the General Social Survey on Victimization
- In this survey, both male and female victims of spousal violence gave several reasons for not reporting to police. The most common reasons were that they dealt with the issue in another way or that they felt it was a personal matter³
- Among victims of non-spousal violence, the most common reasons cited for not reporting were again that they dealt with the issue in another way or that they felt it was not important enough (Chart 4.4)³
- The same survey also identified breach of restraining orders as a barrier to successful interventions against spousal violence³
 - One-third of women who had obtained a restraining order indicated that the order had been breached

Chart 4.4 Reason for not reporting non-spousal violence to police, by sex of victim, Canada, 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2009

Are there any support systems for victims of domestic and sexual violence in place? If yes, what services are available?

- Shelters for women and child victims of abuse are currently operating in every province and territory in Canada. In 2010, 593 shelters were in operation⁷
- 25% of these shelters provide access to women and children living on reserves, and include culturally sensitive programming for Aboriginal populations⁷

- In addition to shelters, there were 911 victim service providers operating in Canada in 2009/2010. The majority of these service providers were police-based or community-based⁸
- Many services not directly offered by victim service providers are made available to victims by referral to other organizations. These other services include child protection services, assistance finding housing, and couples counseling⁸

Is their number sufficient? Are they free of charge?

- According to the results of the most recent Victim Services Survey conducted by Statistics Canada in 2009/2010, most victim service providers reported high levels of accessibility
 - 97% of providers indicated that they were able to accommodate clients with reduced mobility
 - 89% reported being able to accommodate clients with mental health issues
 - 69% were able to help victims who spoke neither of the official languages
- The financial cost of victim services varies widely. Although some services such as basic healthcare and emergency services are covered by provincial health plans, others such as specific counseling services are not
- Although not all victim services are free of charge, financial assistance programs exist in most provinces (all except Newfoundland and the territories)⁹
- In 2009/2010, nine criminal injuries compensation programs across the country collectively awarded over \$63 million to victims⁸

Do you believe that victims know about available support?

- In 2009, the Policy Centre for Victim Issues (PCVI) of the Department of Justice Canada created the Victim Services Directory. The directory allows victims to search for relevant organizations within their own community.⁸
- Despite the availability of this excellent resource, it is unclear whether and to what extent victims are aware of the formal supports available to them. As mentioned previously, the majority of victim service providers in Canada are police-based,³ and incidents of violence continue to go unreported to police
- The 2009 General Social Survey on Victimization found that less than one-third of Canadian female victims of spousal violence reported to police. A similar percentage of female victims of non-spousal violence reported incidents³
- The same survey found that 90% of non-spousal sexual assaults against women went unreported to police³
- 38% of female victims of spousal violence accessed a formal social service, while only 12% of female victims of non-spousal violence contacted a social service³

What could MWIA do to support your national association in preventing and eliminating domestic and sexual violence?

- Continue to help us raise awareness of the prevalence and gravity of the issue, both on a national and international level
- Provide tools that physicians could use to not only recognize and counsel victims of domestic and sexual violence, but also hopefully prevent these occurrences
- Engage in knowledge-sharing with other national organizations to develop strategies that will bring the issue to the top of government priorities

What unique information could be offered by MWIA for a manual on domestic and sexual violence?

- Global perspective on scope of the issue and impact on victims
- Knowledge translation to identify types of programs/services that have helped/not helped in other countries
- Possibly could include a validated toolkit for use by physicians to help victims of violence

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