

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR JUSTICE STATISTICS ON CRIMINAL VICTIMIZATION IN CANADA 2014

Statistics Canada collects data from Canadians every five years on self-reported experiences of criminal victimization. The report is called the General Social Survey, or GSS. Criminal victimization includes: Violent victimization (sexual assault, robbery or physical assault); Theft of personal property; Household victimization (break and enter, theft of motor vehicle, theft or vandalism of household property).

This is a summary of information relating to sexual assault and abuse from the 2014 GSSurvey.

- Victimization rates for all crimes measured by the GSS were lower than those reported 10 years earlier, with the exception of sexual assault, which remained stable.
- Unlike previous GSS reports that found similar violent victimizations rates among males and females, women posted a higher rate than men in 2014. This was mainly due to the relative stability of the sexual assault victimization rate, of which the majority of victims are women.
- As was observed in previous GSS reports and in keeping with police reported data, offenders of criminal victimization were generally male (86%). Sexual assaults were more likely to be committed by a male offender (94%) than physical assaults (82).
- Criminal victimization rates were highest among persons aged 20 to 24.
- Aboriginal females recorded a sexual assault rate of 115 per 1,000 population, much higher than the rate of 35 per 1,000 of non-Aboriginal women.
- The majority (74%) of violent incidents reported by victims in 2014, excluding incidents of spousal violence, involved neither a weapon nor an injury.
- As little as 5% of sexual assaults were reported to police. Reasons for not reporting crimes of victimization included not thinking it was important enough, that is was a personal matter, that they did not want to get the offender in trouble or feared revenge. Some 12% of sexual assault victims also stated that they did not want to bring shame or dishonour to their family.
- Just under one-third of Canadians reported experiencing some form of abuse at the hands of an adult before the age of 15. The majority of self-reported cases of childhood maltreatment (which includes sexual and physical abuse) never came to the attention of authorities, either police or child protective services. (93%). The probability of reporting the abuse increased with the severity and frequency of the abuse. For example, 27% of people who were sexually assaulted more than 10 times before the age of 15 stated that they had spoken about the abuse to authorities.
- In reported cases of sexual abuse, the offender was often a member of the immediate family (18%) or extended family (20%), though many victims identified a stranger (21%), acquaintance (12%), neighbour (8%), friend or teacher (6% each). However, among

those victims of multiple incidents of sexual abuse, a member of the immediate or extended family (65%) was more commonly identified as the perpetrators of the most serious incident of sexual abuse.

- Both physical and sexual abuse experienced during childhood was associated with higher rates of violent victimization as an adult (125 per 1,000 compared to 55).

POLICE REPORTED CRIMES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE 2015

Sexual Assault:

Sexual assaults, like physical assaults, are classified by the Criminal Code into three separate categories depending on the severity of the incident. More specifically, level 1 sexual assault criminalizes assault of a sexual nature that violates the sexual integrity of a person. Sexual assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (level 2) criminalizes sexual assault that involves a weapon, bodily harm or threats to cause bodily harm to a person. Lastly, aggravated sexual assault (level 3) criminalizes sexual assault which wounds, maims, disfigures or endangers the life of another person.

In 2015, there were almost 21,500 police-reported sexual assaults, the majority (98%) of which were classified as level 1 sexual assault. Between 2014 and 2015, the rate of sexual assault level 1 increased 3% to 58 per 100,000 population. The rates of sexual assault level 2 also increased (+13%) with a total of 377 incidents reported in 2015, or a rate of 1 per 100,000 population (about the same level as reported in 2013). In contrast, the rate of the most serious sexual assaults (level 3) declined 11% in 2015 with 104 incidents (12 fewer than in 2014) (Table 5).

Police-reported sexual assaults (all levels combined) increased in most provinces and territories between 2014 and 2015, with the largest increases reported in Prince Edward Island (+14 incidents or a 23% increase in rate), and Newfoundland and Labrador (+62 incidents or a 21% increase in rate) (Table 6).

It is important to note that the number of sexual assaults reported by police is likely an underestimate of the true extent of sexual assault in Canada, as these types of offences often go unreported to police. For instance, self-reported data from the General Social Survey on Victimization showed that only 5% of sexual assaults experienced by Canadians aged 15 years and older in 2014 were brought to the attention of police.

Child Sexual Abuse:

While children or youth can be victims of sexual assaults (levels 1, 2 and 3), there are also a number of sexual violations within the Criminal Code that, by definition, apply only to victims

under the age of 18. These specific sexual violations are categorized within the UCR Survey as “sexual violations against children”.

The rate of police-reported sexual violations against children declined slightly in 2015 (-1%) for the first time since 2010, when full data for these offences became available.

While the overall number of violations remained stable, there was a shift in the types of violations reported. There were 153 fewer police-reported incidents of luring a child via a computer (including the agreement or arrangement to commit a sexual offence against a child), and 28 fewer incidents of invitation to sexual touching. These were offset by an increase between 2014 and 2015 in the number of incidents of sexual interference (+144 incidents), sexual exploitation (+19 incidents) and making sexually explicit material available to a child (+16 incidents).

It is important to note that, for the violations included in “sexual violations against children”, differences in police-reported statistics between geographic areas or across time may be influenced by levels of reporting to police, as well as by single incidents that include several victims. In addition, certain police services dedicate special units to investigate these types of crime, which can also impact differences by geographic areas or changes over time. Similar to sexual assaults in general, the number of sexual violations against children is also expected to be an underestimate due to compounding factors that are likely to impact reporting, such as reliance on an adult to bring the incident to the attention of police

Child Pornography:

In addition to sexual violations against children, for which information on the victim is available, the UCR Survey also collects data on accessing, possessing, making, printing or distributing child pornography.

In 2015, the number and rate of child pornography incidents continued to rise, up from approximately 3,900 incidents in 2014 to about 4,300 incidents in 2015. As a result, the rate increased by 10%, to 12 incidents per 100,000 population in 2015. Part of this increase, can be attributed to a proactive project initiated by the British Columbia Integrated Child Exploitation Unit which recorded Internet Protocol (IP) addresses that were in possession of, and possibly sharing child pornography. As the initiative focused on Victoria in 2015, notable increases in these offences were reported by this jurisdiction.