

In July 2000, Statistics Canada released results from the *1999 General Social Survey on Victimization* (Bunge and Levett 2000). This survey measured spousal violence on a smaller scale than the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS), the first ever national study on violence against women in this country. The results from VAWS, along with statistics from other studies, are now used in annual reports on family violence that assist us in understanding the prevalence of and trends in violence against women in Canada. These studies unfortunately do not address the incidence and prevalence of violence against women partners in visible minority and immigrant communities (see McDonald 1999). The statistics below are taken from these reports and other studies.

In 1999, more than 27,000 cases of spousal violence were reported to police departments across the country. Eighty-seven percent of the victims were women. (Bunge and Levett 2000, 21)

In 1996, approximately 80% of victims of criminal harassment were women. Over half of all female victims of criminal harassment were harassed by ex-spouses or other intimate partners. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 3)

Between 1979 and 1998, 1468 women were killed by their husbands, compared with 433 men killed by their wives. (Statistics Canada 2000, 6)

In 1996, 49% of family homicides involved spouses. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 28)

In 1996, in 56% of all spousal homicides, investigating officers had knowledge of previous domestic violence between victims and suspects. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 32)

In reported incidents of assault against woman partners in 1996, 72% of women were assaulted by a current spouse, and 28% were assaulted by a former or estranged spouse. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 6)

According to the Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS), 29% of ever married women have been assaulted by their partners at least once. (Statistics Canada 1993, 4)

According to the VAWS, 16% of women interviewed reported being kicked, hit, beaten, sexually assaulted or having a gun or knife used against them; 11% reported being pushed, shoved or slapped; 2% reported only threats or having something thrown at them. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 10)

Of women who indicated that they had been victims of spousal violence in the VAWS, only 26% had reported an incident to police. (Statistics Canada 1993, 7) The 1999 General Social Survey found that in the five year period prior to the survey, 37% of women who had been victims of spousal violence had reported an incident to police (Statistics Canada 2000, 5)

Women are three times as likely to report the incident(s) to police if their children witnessed violence against them, four times more likely if a weapon was used against them, and five times more likely to call the police if they feared for their lives. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 11)

Most women interviewed in the VAWS did not call the police for protection or help in ending the violence. This included: 57% of women who were injured by their partners, 51% of women who were assaulted more than ten times, and almost half of all abused women who feared for their lives. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 11)

Twelve percent of Canadian women aged 18-24 reported at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner in a one-year period, compared with the national average of 3% of all married or cohabiting women. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 14)

There is a fourfold difference in rates of violence against women living in common-law relationships compared with women in registered marriages (9% and 2%, respectively). (Bunge and Levett 1998, 14)

Thirty-five percent of all women interviewed in the VAWS who had ever been married or lived with a man in a common-law relationship had been subjected to some form of emotional abuse. This can include: verbal attacks, ridicule, isolation from family and friends, jealousy and unwarranted accusations about infidelity, possessiveness, damage to or destruction of property, torture or killing of pets, and threats to harm children or other family members. (Bunge and Levett 1998,15)

Three quarters of Canadian women who were assaulted or threatened also described their partners as controlling in one or more ways. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 15)

Seventeen percent of women in an intact relationship reported some form of emotional abuse. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 15)

The VAWS found that women in violent relationships were twice as likely to have witnessed their own fathers assaulting their mothers and were three times as likely as women in non-violent relationships to state that their spouse had witnessed violence as a child. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 16)

Fifty-one percent of violent partners were usually drinking at the time of the assaults. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 16)

In a Canada-wide “snapshot” taken on May 31, 1995, there were 2361 women accompanied by 2217 children living in shelters across the country. Four out of five women were there to escape an abusive situation, the majority from abuse by a current partner (64%) or ex-partner (21%). (Bunge and Levett 1998, 18)

In the twelve months prior to this “snapshot” taken on May 31, 1995, 365 shelters across Canada recorded over 85,000 admissions. On a typical day, they receive approximately 3000 requests from non-residents. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 19)

The majority of women who entered a shelter were victims of physical abuse (70%). Almost half of the women reported threats of abuse, and one fifth had experienced sexual abuse. (These numbers add up to more than 100% because many women experienced multiple forms of abuse.) (Bunge and Levett 1998, 19)

Twenty-five percent of women who entered shelters in 1995 had injuries that required medical attention, and 3% required hospitalization. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 19)

One third of women entering shelters in 1995 reported the incident to police. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 19)

Although shelter residents are often the most severely abused women, charges were laid in only 56% of the cases that were reported to the police. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 19)

Two thirds of women admitted to a shelter in 1995 were under the age of 35, while less than five percent were over 55 years of age. (Bunge and Levett 1998, 19)

Women who are between 15 and 19 years of age are twice as likely as older women to be killed in a violent marriage. (Wilson and Daly 1994, 10)

Forty-two percent of women with disabilities have been or are in abusive relationships. (DisAbleD Women's Network 1989)

Eight in ten Aboriginal women in Ontario reported having personally experienced violence. (Ontario Native Women's Association 1989, 7)

Between 75% and 90% of women in some northern Aboriginal communities are battered. (Dumont-Smith and Sioui Labelle 1991, 18)

Immigrant and refugee women often stay in abusive relationships because of isolation, few economic resources, a lack of employment or underemployment and language barriers. (Bhola and Nelson 1990, C-4)

Fear of deportation and fear of the police often keep immigrant and refugee women from reporting domestic violence. (Bhola and Nelson 1990, B-35)

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