



# Just Facts

July 2017

Research and Statistics Division

## Victimization of Indigenous Women and Girls

### Violence against Indigenous women and girls

While all women and girls in Canadian society face an unacceptable risk of violence, particularly at the hands of intimate partners, research shows that Indigenous women and girls self-report experiencing dramatically higher rates of violent victimization.<sup>1</sup>

### Self-reported rate of sexual assault of Indigenous women more than triple that of non-Indigenous women

According to the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization<sup>2</sup>, the rate of self-reported sexual assault of Indigenous people (58<sup>E3</sup> per 1,000) was almost triple that of non-Indigenous people (20 per 1,000). The rate of sexual assault self-reported by Indigenous women (113<sup>E4</sup> per 1,000) was more than triple that of non-Indigenous women (35 per 1,000).

### Self-reported rate of maltreatment of Indigenous girls before the age of 15 close to triple that of Indigenous boys

There was a higher proportion of Indigenous people who self-reported being physically or sexually maltreated before the age of 15 (40%) than non-Indigenous people (29%). More specifically, a larger proportion of Indigenous girls (14%) self-reported experiencing both physical and sexual maltreatment before the age of 15 than Indigenous boys (5%<sup>E</sup>).<sup>5</sup>

### Self-reported spousal violence of Indigenous women three times higher than non-Indigenous women

The 2014 GSS<sup>6</sup> found that 10%<sup>E</sup> of Indigenous women self-reported having been assaulted by a current or former spouse within the last five years compared with 3% of their non-Indigenous counterparts.<sup>7</sup> The proportion of self-reported spousal violence against Indigenous women was almost twice as high in the territories (19%) than in the provinces (10%<sup>E</sup>).

### Injury in cases of self-reported spousal violence more common for Indigenous women victims

According to the 2014 GSS on Victimization<sup>8</sup>, injury in cases of self-reported spousal violence is more common for Indigenous female victims (51%) than for non-Indigenous female victims (39%). Of these



Indigenous female victims, almost half (56%<sup>E</sup>) self-reported severe forms of spousal violence (i.e. where the victim was sexually assaulted, beaten, choked, or threatened with a gun or a knife).

### **Indigenous female victims of spousal violence more likely to fear for their lives**

The 2014 GSS<sup>9</sup> also highlights that Indigenous female victims were more likely to fear for their lives (53%<sup>E</sup>) in comparison to non-Indigenous female victims (29%).<sup>10</sup> Indigenous females (25%) were also more likely than non-Indigenous females (13%) to self-report emotional<sup>11</sup> or financial<sup>12</sup> abuse by a current or former spouse. In a little over nine out of ten cases (96%), an Indigenous female victim of physical violence also self-reported an emotional or financial victimization.

### **Indigenous mothers have higher self-reported frequency of abuse compared to non-Indigenous mothers**

Daoud et al. (2012)<sup>13</sup> found that self-reported abuse towards Indigenous mothers was higher (31%) than that reported by non-Indigenous mothers (12%). The most common perpetrator was a partner, husband or boyfriend. The study also showed high proportions of abuse among lone-mothers<sup>14</sup> (35%). In another study, Daoud et al. (2013)<sup>15</sup> found that close to one third (31%) of Indigenous mothers reported being a victim of abuse and 16% reported being a victim of intimate partner violence (IPV)<sup>16</sup>. In comparison, 12% of non-Indigenous mothers reported being a victim of abuse and 6% reported being a victim of IPV.

### **IPV can worsen after a separation**

It is common for IPV to worsen after a separation. A study by Pedersen et al. (2013)<sup>17</sup> found that 22% of Indigenous women self-reported being a victim of post-separation intimate partner violence (PSIPV) compared to 7% of non-Indigenous women within five years after the separation. Results showed that coercive control<sup>18</sup> and age were predominant factors explaining the inequalities in PSIPV between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women. The study found that Indigenous women experience more coercive control than non-Indigenous women and that more of them were younger than their non-Indigenous counterparts.

### **About a third of Indigenous female victims of spousal violence contact a formal victim service**

The 2014 GSS on Victimization<sup>19</sup> showed that 71% of Indigenous women who were victims of spousal violence contacted a formal victim service. The 2013/14 Transition Home Survey (THS)<sup>20</sup> show a total of 5% of all shelters are located on reserves. In addition, more than half (63%) of the shelters in Canada reported offering culturally relevant services for Indigenous women, 46% reported offering culturally relevant services for Indigenous children and 21% reported having available services in at least one Indigenous language (primarily Cree, Ojibway or Inuktitut). Although the THS did not report on the Indigenous identity of its clients, there were more admissions in the territories and in western provinces. A previous THS (2005/06)<sup>21</sup> collected data on the nature and use of shelters situated on reserves. Facilities on-reserve were twice as likely to be emergency-oriented than those off-reserve. As well, the on-reserve shelter clientele was more likely to have previously used the shelter compared to clients in off-reserve shelters. Finally, while the majority of women in shelters both on- and off-reserve were fleeing abuse, the proportion of those on-reserve fleeing abuse was slightly higher (78% and 73%, respectively).



---

<sup>1</sup> Boyce, J. "Victimization of Aboriginal people in Canada, 2014." *Juristat*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "E" is identified by Statistics Canada as "use with caution".

<sup>4</sup> According to Boyce (2016), this was significantly different from the non-Indigenous people category.

<sup>5</sup> Boyce, J. 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> GSS results have consistently showed that the self-reported rate of spousal violence is much higher among Indigenous women than non-Indigenous women (see for example: Boyce, J. 2016; Brennan, S. "Violent victimization of Aboriginal women in the Canadian provinces, 2009." *Juristat*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X, 2011; Brownridge, D.A. "Male Partner Violence against Aboriginal Women in Canada - An Empirical Analysis." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 18: 65, 2003; Brownridge D.A. "Understanding the Elevated Risk of Partner Violence against Aboriginal Women: A Comparison of Two Nationally Representative Surveys of Canada." *Journal of Family Violence* 23: 353, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Special request to Statistics Canada.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Brennan (2011) notes that injury and fear among Indigenous women victims of self-reported spousal violence may be related to the severity of the spousal violence.

<sup>11</sup> Forms of emotional abuse reported by Indigenous women include: being put down or name calling, partner demanding to know where they are at all times, partner not wanting them to talk to other people, partner limiting their contact with family and friends, and partner damages or destroys personal property or possessions.

<sup>12</sup> For example, being prevented from the knowledge of or access to family income.

<sup>13</sup> Daoud, N., et al. "Prevalence of Abuse and Violence Before, During, and After Pregnancy in a National Sample of Canadian Women". *American Journal of Public Health*, 102: 10, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> In Daoud et al. (2012)'s study, lone-mothers refers to single, divorced, separated or widowed mothers.

<sup>15</sup> Daoud, N., et al. "The Contribution of Socio-economic Position to the Excesses of Violence and Intimate Partner Violence Among Aboriginal Versus Non-Aboriginal Women in Canada". *Can J Public Health*, 104: 4, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Intimate partner violence includes violence against spouses and dating partners in current and former relationships.

<sup>17</sup> Pedersen, J. S., et al. "Explaining Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal Inequalities in Postseparation Violence Against Canadian Women: Application of a Structural Violence Approach". *Violence Against Women*, 19: 8, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> In this study, a coercive control index was created based on seven dichotomous variables, such as : "limited contact with family and friends", "jealous and did not want respondent to talk to other men", "demanded to know who respondent was with/where at all times", "prevented respondent's knowing about/access to family income", "harmed/threatened to harm someone close", "damaged or destroyed possessions or property", and "putting the respondent down or called her names to make her feel bad".

<sup>19</sup> Brennan, S. 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Beattie, S., and Hutchins, H. "Shelters for abused women in Canada, 2014." *Juristat*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 85-002-X. 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor-Butts, A. "Canada's shelters for abused women, 2005/2006." *Juristat*, 27, 4, 2007.

