

Intimate Partner Violence and Brain Injury: Physical violence statistics from Statistics Canada 2018 “Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces”

February 2022

This federal survey made its debut in 2018, with statistics made available to the public in spring 2021. The sample for the survey involved two streams: 43,296 people ages 15 or older living in a Canadian province (response rate 43 per cent); and 2,597 living in a Canadian territory, (response rate 73 per cent). This means that approximately 20,000 Canadians responded to this survey.

The survey categorizes experiences of intimate partner violence in three broad categories: emotional/psychological violence; physical violence; and sexual violence. For the purposes of this summary, we’re focusing on physical violence, as that is the form of abuse most likely to result in a brain injury.

These are the questions in the physical abuse category with particular relevance to brain injury:

- Shook, pushed, grabbed or threw you
- Hit you with a fist or object
- Choked you
- Slapped you
- Beat you

SSPPS findings relevant to IPV-BI

There were several types of IPV behaviour that were more than five times more prevalent among women than among men. These forms of violence tended to be the less common but more severe acts measured by the survey. Women, relative to men, were considerably more likely to have experienced certain abusive behaviours in their lifetime, including being choked (7% versus 1%).

Physical and sexual abuse are much more likely than other forms of abuse to induce a fear state among victims. Among victims of IPV who experienced solely psychological forms of abuse, 12% of women and 4% of men stated that they had ever been afraid of a partner. In contrast, 55% of women who experienced physical or sexual IPV feared a partner at some point, as did 14% of men.

30 % of women and 27% of men stated that at least one type of IPV (physical, sexual or psychological) had occurred repeatedly: either on a monthly basis or more often

Of the half of respondents who reported that they were victims of abusive behaviours less than monthly but still repeatedly in the previous year, women were twice as likely as men to have experienced at least one abusive behaviour on a daily or almost daily basis in the past 12 months (12% versus 6%)

Twenty per cent of women and 12 per cent of men report being injured as a result of IPV. Three per cent of women victims report losing consciousness. The comparable percentage for men was too low for survey confidence.

Reporting to police and seeking additional support

Women who experienced IPV on a monthly basis or more (13%) were more likely to say that the abuse had come to the attention of police, compared to those who had experienced IPV once (2%) or a few times (5%). Regardless of frequency, however, the vast majority of IPV did not come to the attention of police.

(**The 2019 General Social Survey found that 80 per cent of those who experienced spousal violence did not report it to the police. This lack of reporting has increased since 1999, when 28 per cent of domestic violence victims reported the violence to police.)

This could reflect the fact that some of the IPV behaviours measured may not be perceived by victims as a criminal matter or as something that can or should be reported to police. According to the 2014 General Social Survey, the two most common reasons for not reporting spousal violence to the police were a belief that the abuse was a private or personal matter and a perception that it was not important enough to report

As noted, the majority of IPV victims had not used or consulted a formal service in the past 12 months. The most common reasons given by IPV victims who did not use these services were that they didn't want or need help (51% of women and 56% of men) or that the incident was too minor (38% of women and 29% of men).

Populations with the highest rates of IPV victimization

Three in ten (29%) women 15 to 24 years of age reported having experienced IPV in the past 12 months, more than double the proportion found among women between the ages of 25 to 34 or 35 to 44, and close to six times higher than that among women 65 years of age or older. Likewise, for men, 26% of 15- to 24-year-olds had experienced some form of IPV in the past 12 months, declining to 5% among those 65 years of age and older.

Women with a history of physical or sexual abuse before the age of 15 were about twice as likely as women with no such history to have experienced IPV either since age 15 (67% versus 35%) or in the past 12 months (18% versus 10%).

This pattern was also evident among men; over half (53%) of those who were physically or sexually abused during childhood reported experiencing IPV at some point in their lifetime, while this was the case for three in ten (30%) men who were not abused during childhood. Likewise, men who were abused during childhood were more likely than those who were not to have experienced IPV in the past 12 months (17% versus 10%).

The gendered nature of this violence is notable here: while physical assault outside of intimate partner relationships was more common for men (33%) than women (26%), physical assault within an intimate relationship was more common among women (23%) than men (17%).

Physical versus sexual violence

For women, the most common type of assault differed depending on the type of relationship. When looking at violence committed by an intimate partner, physical assault was more common than sexual assault. The reverse was true when looking at violence not committed by an intimate partner. For men, regardless of the relationship to the perpetrator, physical assault was far more common than sexual assault.

The 2019 General Social Survey found that 39% of female victims and 23% of male victims reported being physically injured from domestic violence.

Rates for female victims for specific questions of physical abuse relevant to brain injury

- Shook, pushed, grabbed or threw you
 - Overall, 17.9 per cent;
 - Indigenous women, 31.6 per cent;
 - visible minority, 9.3;
 - young women 11.6 per cent;
 - sexual minority women 30.8 per cent;
 - women with disabilities 23.9

- Hit you with a fist or object
 - 11.3 overall;
 - 26.4 for Indigenous women;
 - visible minority 5.9 per cent;
 - young women 7.6 per cent;
 - sexual minority women 22.3;
 - women with disabilities 16.5

- Choked you
 - 6.5 per cent overall;
 - 17.3 per cent for Indigenous;
 - 3.2 per cent visible minority;
 - women 5.9 per cent;
 - sexual minority women 16.5;
 - women with disabilities 10.2

- Slapped you
 - 11.4 per cent overall;
 - 25.5 per cent Indigenous;
 - 6.2 per cent visible minority;
 - young women 8.2 per cent;

- sexual minority women 24.7;
- women with disabilities 16.4
- Beat you
 - Overall 6 per cent;
 - Indigenous 16 per cent;
 - visible minority 3.5 per cent;
 - young women 6 per cent;
 - sexual minority women 11.7;
 - women with disabilities 9.4

Other sources in Canada where IPV data is being gathered (potential for adding brain-injury questions):

- The 27 items used in the SSPPS were drawn from various sources, including the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), the Composite Abuse Scale Revised Short Form (CASr-SF), and new items designed to address gaps in both of these measures.
- General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS) has collected information on intimate partner violence using the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) every 5 years since 1999, with data for 2019 available in 2021. In 2014, dating violence was captured through the addition of a brief module, which was expanded to align with the CTS in 2019.
- Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR). The UCR includes details on the incidents, accused, and victims, but is limited only to those incidents that come to the attention of police.
- Prior to the SSPPS, data on lifetime victimization was most recently published based on the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS). The VAWS surveyed women 18 years of age and older and was limited to asking about experiences of violence committed by men. Though not directly comparable to the SSPPS for these reasons, the VAWS found that 51% of women had been physically or sexually victimized by a man since they were 16 ([Statistics Canada 1993](#)).

Additional statistics from [2019 Family Violence in Canada](#) (released summer 2021)

Physical assault was the most common type of family violence reported to police, affecting 7 in 10 (71%) victims. More than half (54%) of child and youth victims of family violence were physically assaulted, as were about three-quarters of senior (72%) and intimate partner (75%) victims of violence.

Child and youth, intimate partner, and senior victims of family violence all experienced higher rates of physical assault than other types of violence. There was one exception: girls aged 17 and younger experienced a slightly higher rate of sexual offences—including sexual assault and sexual violations against children—than physical assault (170 versus 167 per 100,000 population).

This is an annual survey from the Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics at Stats Canada. This is from the Uniform Crime Reporting survey.