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# Measuring gender-based violence in Canada

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# Two primary measures of crime in Canada

## 1) Police-reported administrative surveys

- Uniform Crime Reporting Survey
- Homicide Survey

## 2) Self-reported victimization survey

- General Social Survey on Victimization



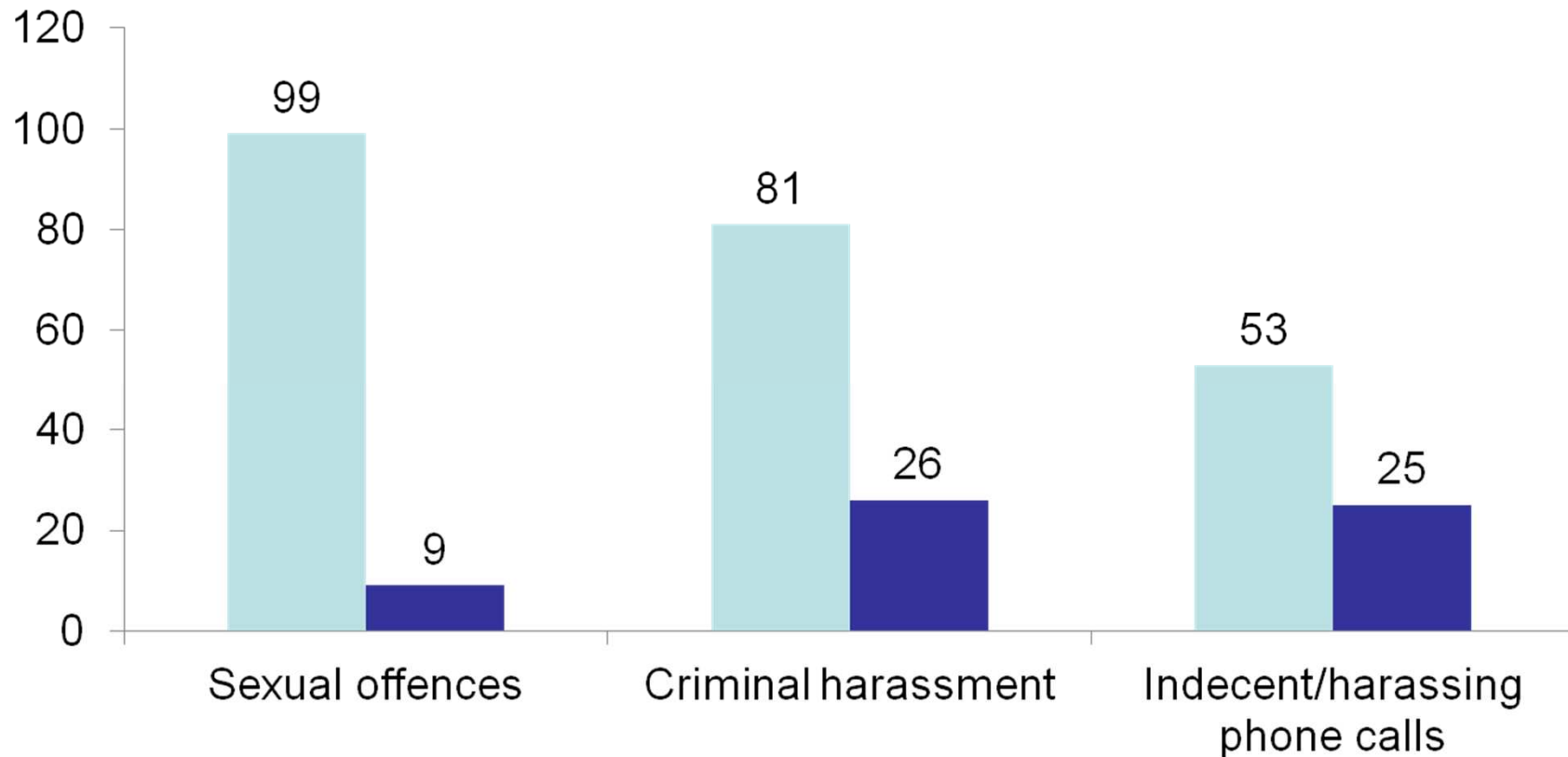
# Police statistics – Uniform Crime Reporting Survey

- Collecting aggregate police statistics since 1962.
  
- In 1988, it began collecting micro data from police services.
  - Criminal event (e.g., location)
  - Victim (e.g., sex, age and relationship to accused)
  - Accused (e.g., sex and age)
  
- Number of police services covered in the micro data increased steadily over the years. The coverage now stands at 99%.



# Women much more likely to be sexually victimized

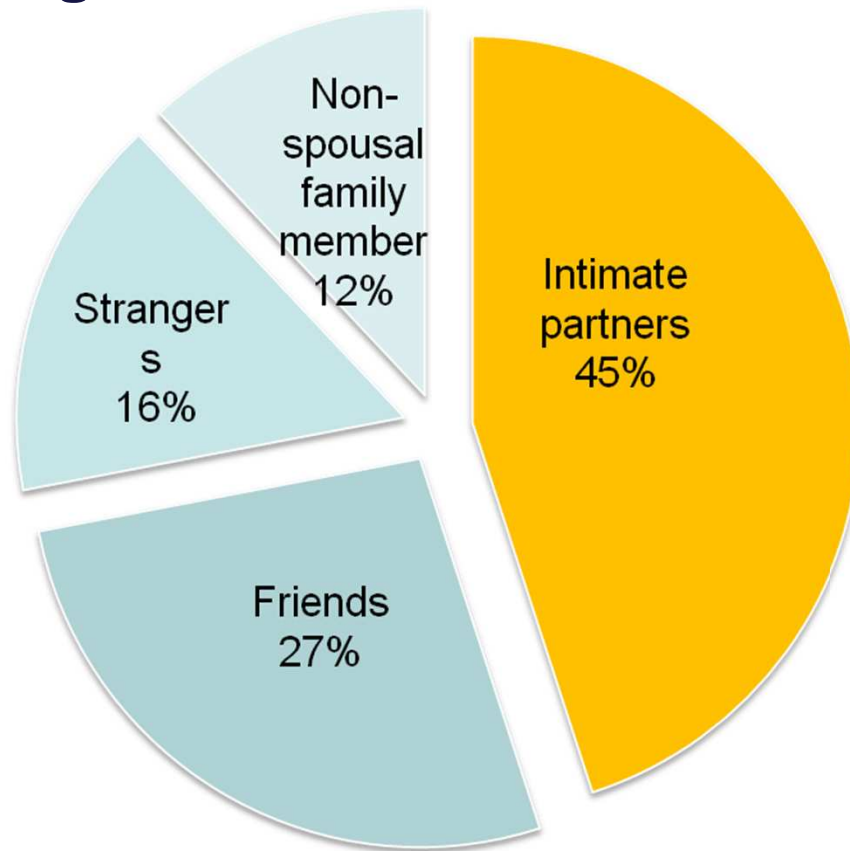
Rate per 100,000 population



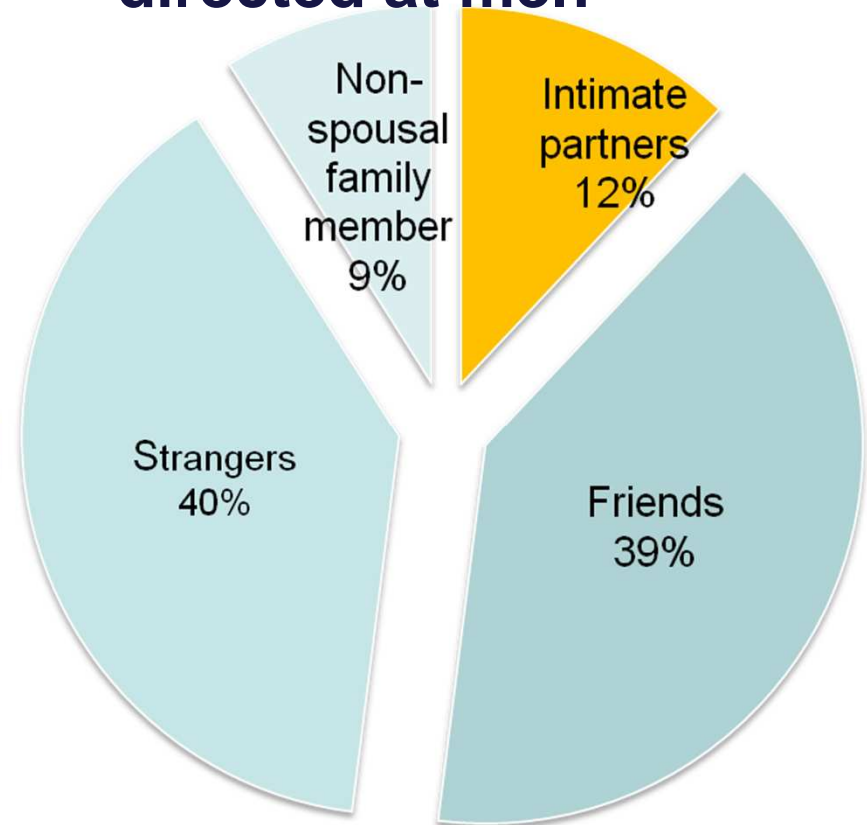
**Source:** Statistics Canada, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2011.



## Perpetrators of violence against women



## Perpetrators of violence directed at men



Source: Statistics Canada, Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2011.



# Criminal justice response to gender-based violence

Violent incidents involving female victims more likely to proceed with formal charges

- 71% of cleared incidents against women resulted in a charge, compared to 63% of incidents against men





# Advantages of police-reported data

- Annual statistics
- Standard measure over time and among cities and provinces
- Mandatory survey, with nearly full coverage
- Based on physical evidence and witnesses



## Limitations of police-reported data

- Certain socio-demographic variables are not collected within this survey, such as immigrant status, education, income
- No victim information exists for non-violent crime, such as financial abuse (e.g., theft, forgery, fraud)
- Little information about the consequences of violence beyond physical injury
- Includes only those incidents that come to the attention of police, which is a greater issue for intimate partner violence and sexual violence





# Self-reported victimization surveys

- General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization
  - Began in 1988, repeated every five years
  - Sample survey of Canadians aged 15 years and older
  
- The survey has been an **essential tool** in:
  - Assessing possible underestimation of police-reported data and in contextualizing results from police-reported surveys
  - and
  - Identifying risk factors independently associated with violent victimization



## Possible underestimation of police statistics

- Based on the GSS, we know that two forms of violence are most likely to be underreported to police:
  - Sexual assaults: ~9 in 10 incidents not reported
  - Spousal violence : ~8 in 10 incidents not reported
- Levels of reporting to police have been stable over time, except for spousal violence against women, which has dropped over time.



## Contextualizing police statistics

- Based on the GSS, women are more likely to report their spousal victimization to police. This is likely related to the increased levels of seriousness (i.e., injury, types of violent offences, repetitive nature)
- Gender differences in reporting to police help explain why police-reported intimate partner violence is four times higher for women.



## Identifying risk factors

- The range of socio-demographic variables collected by the GSS permits regression analysis.
- For women, a number of factors elevate their risk of violence at the hands of a friend, acquaintance or stranger.
  - Young age, being single, participating in many evening activities, using drugs, being an Aboriginal person and living in a community characterized by social disorder.



# Evolution of self-reported victimization surveys in Canada

- The first GSS on Victimization, conducted in 1988, was essentially gender-neutral.
  - No distinction between physical and sexual assault
- In 1993, the GSS was revised to make this distinction
- Also, in 1993, Statistics Canada undertook a dedicated survey on violence against women: Canadian Violence Against Women Survey.

# Building on the Violence Against Women Survey

- A special module on spousal violence was developed within the GSS on Victimization, which is repeated every five years.
- A series of questions on spousal violence are used, recognizing the unique nature of spousal violence (often not an isolated incident).
- Unlike VAWS, the target population was not only women but also men.



## Expanded the potential for gender-based analysis

- Allows for an understanding of both violence against women and violence directed at men.
- Recognizes gender is relational. Women cannot be viewed in isolation but their experiences must be contextualized in relation to men's.



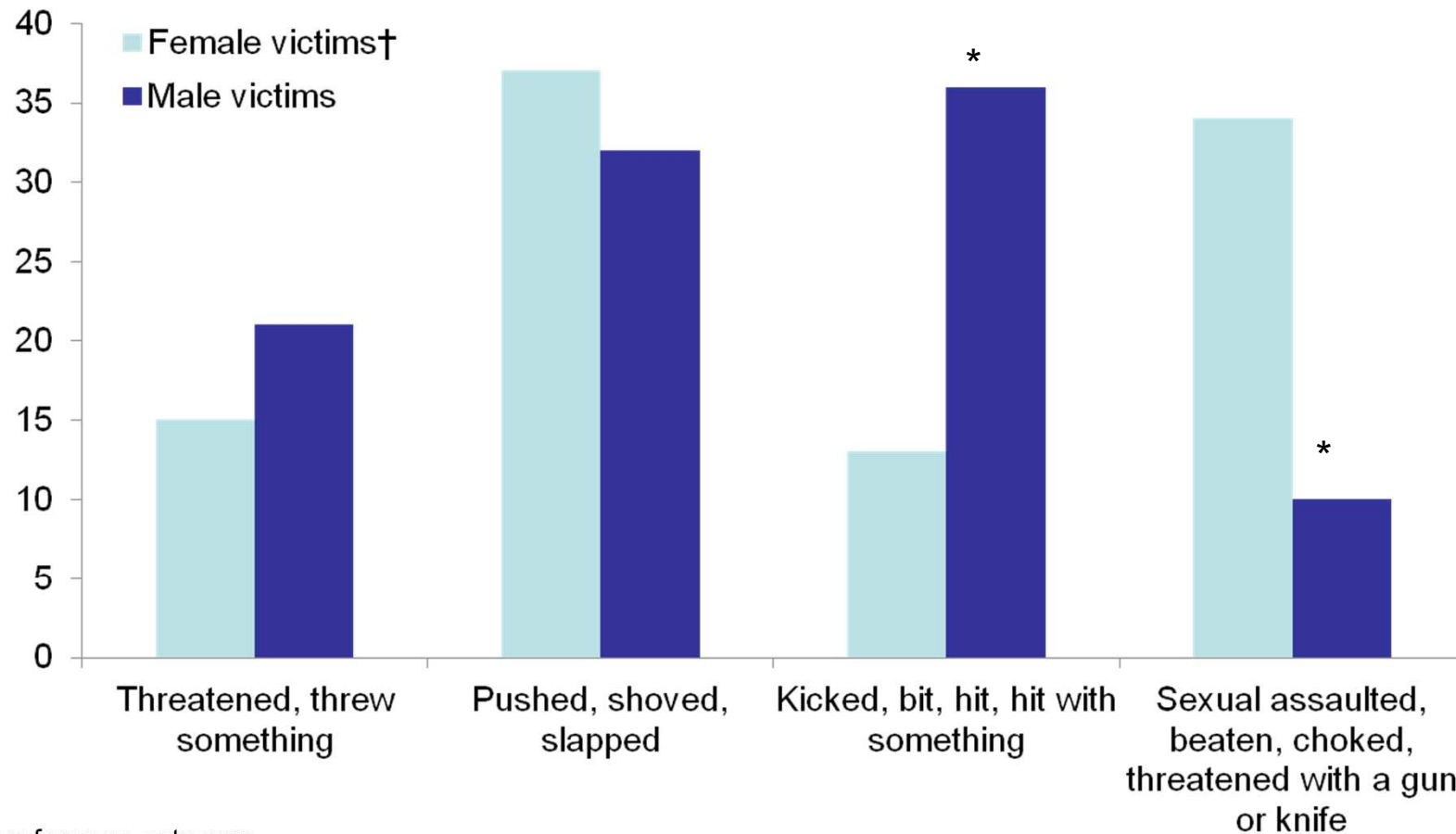
## Example: Spousal violence

- In 2009, 6% of women experienced spousal violence in the last 5 years, similar to the proportion for men.
- However, women are more likely than men to experience
  - The most severe forms of self-reported spousal victimization
  - Chronic forms of spousal violence
  - Physical injury





## Women more likely to experience severe forms of spousal violence, 2009



† reference category

\* significantly different from reference category ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey on Victimization.

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## Being responsive to new and emerging issues with the GSS

- **2004:** Introduced a special module on criminal harassment (i.e., stalking)
- **2009:** Introduced questions on cybercrime (including child luring and cyberbullying)
- **2014:**
  - Introduced new questions on dating violence.
  - Expanded questions on physical and sexual victimization in childhood and children witnessing spousal violence.
  - Introduced new question on sexual violence to capture incidents where person is unable to consent to sexual activity because they were drugged, intoxicated, manipulated, or forced in other ways than physically.



## Advantages of GSS

- Enhances gender-based analysis.
- Allows examination of crime that goes unreported to police
- Identifies risk factors associated with violence (for both women and men)
- Provides information on non-violent forms of spousal abuse (i.e., emotional and financial abuse)
- Captures information on consequences of victimization, levels of reporting to police, children's exposure to spousal violence and social service utilization



## Limitations of self-reported data

- Subject to sampling error
- Voluntary: relies on willingness of Canadians to participate
- Possible exclusion of certain population groups of women - those living in institutions and those unable to communicate in English or French



## Analysis and dissemination

- Collecting data on violence against women and men is not enough. Gender-based analysis of data is critical to ensuring the information is relevant to both policy and programs.
- Statistics Canada is committed to conducting robust analysis on women's experience of victimization and making these findings publicly available (e.g., recent release of 'Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends' - 2013)
- Future efforts will continue to link record within and across surveys to further strengthen analysis and address information gaps.



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## Questions/Comments?