

**A statistical portrait of  
intimate partner violence:  
Nova Scotian and Canadian Perspectives**

**Nova Scotia Department of Justice  
Policy, Planning and Research**

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## **Introduction**

**T**his statistical backgrounder has been developed to help inform the work of the Coordinating Committee on Domestic Violence by shedding light on the scope of intimate partner violence in Nova Scotia.

The committee is in place to help coordinate a proposed response to a series of recommendations outlined in the Domestic Violence Prevention Committee Report. That report represents a year-long effort by a joint community-government committee on ways to improve our shared response to domestic violence. Tabled in June 2009, the report contains over 100 ideas where key themes include the need for community and government collaboration on an ongoing basis; and the need for a continuum of services that meet the diverse needs of clients - when, where and how they need them. Specific action requests range from legislative and policy changes to service delivery improvements; and from public education focused on prevention to training for those working in the line of defence against domestic violence.

Spousal violence generally encompasses violent behaviour that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm between persons in an intimate relationship. Spousal violence does not appear as a specific offence under the Criminal Code of Canada.

Given what is a complex public policy issue, there is no one data source to turn to for a comprehensive picture on the scope of this issue hence the reason why numerous criminal justice data sources were reviewed for this profile. Some sources of data do not adequately capture information about the experiences of groups within the population. It is therefore important to use multiple sources of information when making decisions about how to best prevent intimate partner violence or where to target resources, etc.

When making statistical conclusions about the population of Nova Scotia as a whole, it is especially important to consider its demographic make-up. According to the 2006 Census, 5 per cent of Nova Scotia's population is comprised of immigrants; 2 per cent are of African descent, 4 per cent are racially visible persons; 3 per cent identify as Aboriginal; and 7.5 per cent have a mother tongue other than English (just over half of whom have French as their mother tongue). The population of Nova Scotia is comprised primarily of white, non-immigrant, non-Aboriginal and English-speaking people. Statistical conclusions made about the overall population are more accurate in relation to the majority rather than to smaller groups within the population. Conclusions made about women in the overall population, therefore, may not necessarily apply to minority groups, eg., women of African descent, Aboriginal women, Francophone women, etc., with the same degree of accuracy. Care should be taken not to assume that the situation of all women in Nova Scotia is the same.

The coordinating committee will be working to build on the statistical information that is available with plans to update this document regularly.

## Highlights

### The incidence and nature of intimate partner violence: What victimization surveys tell us...

- Between 1999 and 2004, eight per cent of women (approximately 21,000) in **Nova Scotia** experienced violence by their current or former spouse/intimate partner.
- While the proportion of women who experienced intimate partner violence (8 per cent) was about the same as the proportion of men who experienced intimate partner violence (7 per cent), women (in **Canada** as a whole) were much more likely than men to:
  - be assaulted multiple times
  - experience the most serious forms of violence such as being beaten, choked, sexually assaulted or having a weapon used against them
  - suffer greater physical and emotional consequences as a result of the violence.
- There are a number of socio-demographic factors that are associated with being at greater (or lesser) risk for experiencing spousal violence. Some groups are more vulnerable to violence than others, for example, in **Canada**:
  - Young spouses/partners, particularly those aged 15-24 are at greater risk for spousal assault and spousal homicide.
  - Those in common-law relationships are at higher risk than those in spousal relationships. Women who have separated from their abusive partner are at higher risk for homicide.
  - The presence of emotional or psychological abuse is one of the strongest predictors of physical and sexual violence in an intimate partner relationship.
  - Women and men with disabilities experience spousal violence more frequently than those without disabilities. They also experience more severe forms of violence than persons without disabilities.
  - Aboriginal women in Canada have five-year spousal assault rates that are three and a half times greater than rates for non-Aboriginal women.
- Disclosing spousal violence can be difficult for many victims. In 2004, most **Canadian** victims (about three-quarters) indicated that they had confided in someone close to them such as a friend, neighbour or family member. About one-third of victims had turned to a formal help agency such as a shelter or crisis centre. Close to one-quarter (22 per cent) of victims had told no one until they disclosed the violence to the survey interviewer over the telephone.
- Just over one quarter (26 per cent) of **Nova Scotia** women who had experienced intimate partner violence reported it to police compared to 36 per cent of Canadian women. Nova Scotia's rate of reporting to police is one of the lowest in Canada.

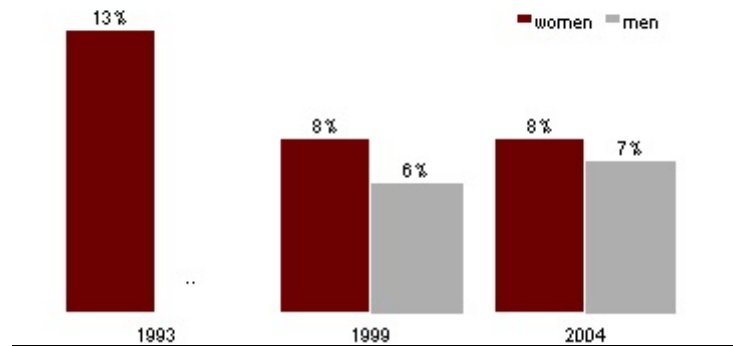
## Incidence of intimate partner violence in Nova Scotia

In 2004, as part of its General Social Survey (GSS), Statistics Canada asked Canadians aged 15 years and older about their experiences of being a victim of crime, their level of fear, and their perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system. It was the fourth time the GSS had examined victimization - previous surveys were conducted in 1988, 1993, and 1999, and another was scheduled for 2009. This profile will be updated as soon as 2009 data become available.

Victimization surveys are an important source of data on the incidence and nature of intimate partner violence since so much of this violence goes unreported, as will be discussed below.

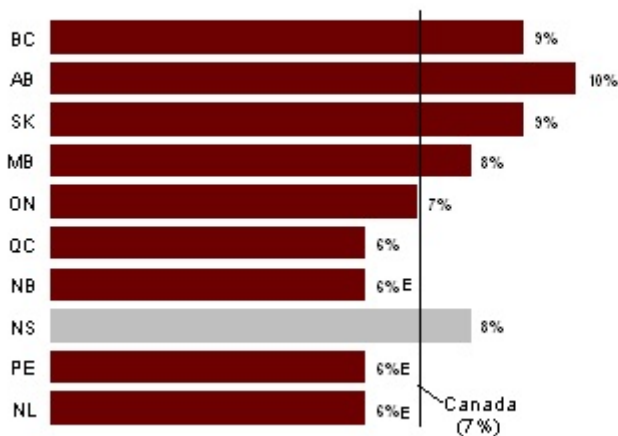
According to the 2004 GSS on victimization, 8 per cent of women and 7 per cent of men in Nova Scotia reported experiencing spousal violence in the five years preceding the survey. These rates are similar to what was reported in 1999 (8% for women and 6% for men). The five-year spousal violence rate for females (8 per cent) represents approximately 21,000 women in Nova Scotia. The male rate of 7 per cent represents approximately 20,000 men<sup>1</sup>.

*Five-year rates of spousal violence by sex of victim  
Nova Scotia, 1993 to 2004*



**Figure 1.**

*Five-year rates of spousal violence against women  
by province, 2004*



<sup>E</sup> Use with caution, high coefficient of variation

**Figure 2.**

As was the case in 1999, women living in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia were the most likely to report spousal violence in 2004. Percentages were lowest for women living in Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Quebec.

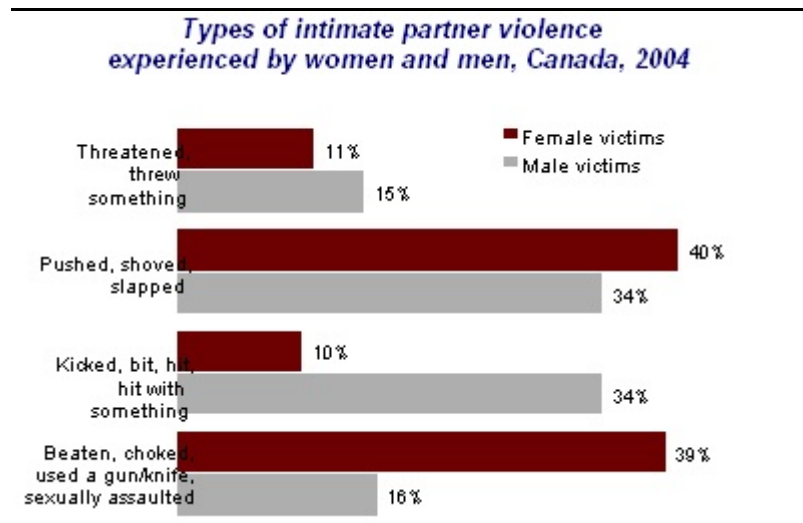
There were no significant declines/increases in provincial rates of spousal violence from 1999 to 2004.

## Severity and impacts of intimate partner violence

**According to the 2004 GSS:** Canadian women were more likely than men to be the victims of the most severe types of spousal violence, such as being beaten, choked, or threatened with or having a gun or knife used against them as well as spousal homicide.

There is some indication that the severity of spousal violence against women in Canada has diminished over time. There was a statistically significant reduction (from 50% in 1993 to 39% in 2004) in the percentage

of female victims of spousal violence subjected to the most severe types of assault (being beaten, choked, threatened with or had a gun or knife used against them or sexually assaulted).



**Figure 3.**

*Impacts of intimate partner violence on victims Canada, 2004*

	female victims	male victims	
<b>Psychological</b>	angry	37%	25%
	fearful	30%	5%
	depressed/anxious	21%	9%
	sleeping problems	15%	4%
	ashamed/guilty	12%	3%
not much	6%	30%	
<b>Physical</b>	physically injured	44%	19%
	received medical attention	13%	2%
	was hospitalized	10%	2%
	took time off daily activities	29%	10%
	experienced 10+ assaults	21%	11%
feared for their lives	34%	10%	

**Table 1.**

Female victims of spousal violence were much more likely than males to report being injured, suffer lost productivity, experience multiple assaults, fear for their lives, suffer financial abuse and experience negative emotional consequences as a result of the intimate partner violence they experienced. Male victims were five times more likely than females (30 per cent versus 6 per cent) to report that the violence had not affected them.

**Multiple victimization:** Results from the 2004 GSS showed that in the majority of violent spousal relationships, the violence was not an isolated incident. Over half (54%) of Canadians who reported experiencing spousal violence in a current or previous relationship had experienced

violence on more than one occasion over the past five years. Women were more likely than men (57% versus 49%) to experience repeated violence and were almost twice as likely as male victims (21% versus 11%) to have experienced more than 10 violent incidents by their partner (includes current and previous partners).

**Children witnessing intimate partner violence:** Findings from the 2004 GSS also show that Canadian children witnessed spousal assaults of their mothers or fathers in a substantial number of cases. In 40 per cent of cases where their mothers were assaulted (over a five-year period) and in 25 per cent of cases where their fathers were assaulted (over a five-year period), the violence was witnessed by children. It is estimated that in half of incidents of children witnessing their mothers being assaulted, the female victim was injured and/or feared for her life, indicating that the violence many children are witnessing is severe.

### **Motivations for intimate partner violence: Are they the same for male and female perpetrators?**

As evidenced above, there are clear differences in the extent and severity of intimate partner violence experienced by women and men. Research also indicates that female perpetrators of intimate partner violence may also have different motivations for the violence than male perpetrators. Several researchers conclude that the motivations of male perpetrators of intimate partner violence tend to involve using aggression or violence to assert domination and control over a partner. Women who are violent towards their partners, on the other hand, are more likely to be motivated by “frustration and anger rather than any specific objective” and their violence is more likely to be retaliatory or committed in self-defence.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

### **Demographic and socio-economic factors linked to intimate partner violence**

Intimate partner violence affects everyone, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation or ability, however, some factors do put people at greater risk.

**Relationship length and type:** The 2004 GSS found that spouses/partners who had been in a relationship for three years or less had spousal assault rates that were three times higher than those in relationships of ten years or more. Rates for people in common-law relationships were three times higher than for those in marital unions. Similarly, those in common law relationships have higher rates of spousal homicide.

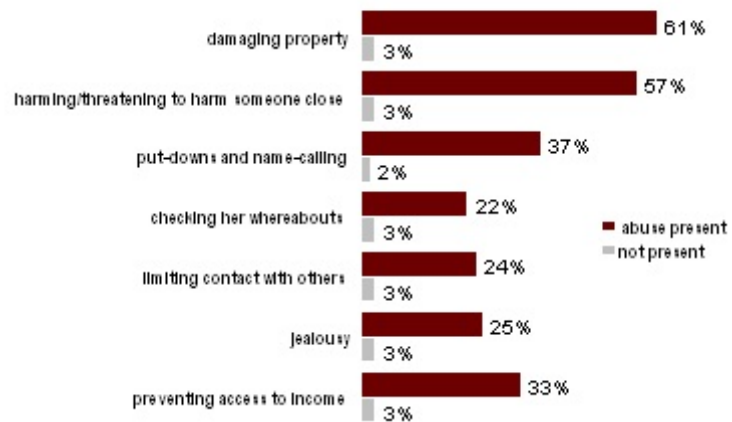
**Separation:** Women have a heightened risk of homicide after marital separation. Between 1991 and 1999, separated women in Canada were 8 times more likely to be killed by estranged partners (39 per million couples), than by current husbands (5 per million couples). In half of these ex-partner homicides, the woman was killed within two months of leaving the relationship.<sup>5</sup>



**Presence of emotional and psychological abuse:** is considered to be one of the strongest predictors of physical and sexual violence in intimate partner relationships. The 2004 GSS showed that women whose partners were psychologically abusive were 7 to 20 times more likely to be assaulted by their current spouse/partner compared to women whose partners were not psychologically abusive. A similar pattern was found in relation to former spouses/partners. Examples of emotional/psychological abuse include: damaging property, harming or threatening to harm someone close, put-downs and name-calling, checking her whereabouts, limiting contact with others, jealousy, and preventing access to income.

**Income:** Low income has been linked to higher rates of spousal violence. For example, the 2004 GSS showed that spousal assault rates were twice as high for Canadian women whose household incomes were less than \$60,000 compared to those with higher incomes. It's not clear if low income is a risk factor for spousal violence or a consequence of it.

*Percentage of women assaulted by a current partner when psychological abuse was present, Canada, 2004*



**Figure 4.**

**Alcohol use:** Alcohol use is strongly correlated with

spousal violence. According to the 2004 GSS, 44 per cent of female victims and 24 per cent of male victims indicated their spouse had been drinking at the time of the assault. While alcohol use has been linked to intimate partner violence, it's not necessarily a direct cause of the violence as alcohol abusers may have co-occurring risk factors.

**Young women:** Age of victim has a definite association with intimate partner violence as it does with overall violent victimization. According to the 2004 GSS, younger spouses/partners, in particular those aged 15-24 years, were more than twice as likely to be victims of spousal assault compared to those 35 years of age or older. In Canada, rates of spousal homicide are also highest for 15-24 year-olds, particularly females.

As was the case for overall levels of crime and victimization, the GSS found that seniors were less likely to experience spousal violence than their younger counterparts. Less than one per cent of all seniors with a current or previous spouse reported experiencing any type of spousal violence in the 12 months preceding the survey compared to two per cent of those under the age of 65. Seniors were also the least likely among all age groups to report having experienced emotional or financial abuse (by their spouse) in the five years preceding the survey. Eight per cent of those aged 65 and over had experienced emotional or financial abuse by their spouse, compared to 13 per cent of 55 to 64 year-olds and 31 per cent of 15 to 24 year-olds.

**Gay, lesbian and bisexual persons:** According to the 2004 GSS, Canadians who identified themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual experienced higher rates of spousal violence compared to heterosexuals. Fifteen per cent of gays/lesbians and 28 per cent of bisexuals compared to 7 per cent of heterosexuals reported experiencing spousal abuse<sup>6</sup>.

**People with disabilities:** The greater vulnerability and dependence of persons with disabilities increases their risk of being victims of violence by someone they know. Persons with disabilities also have a higher risk of experiencing spousal violence. According to the 2004 GSS, Canadians with disabilities were between 50 and 100 per cent more likely to experience spousal violence, depending on the type.

Persons with disabilities were also:

- two to three times more likely to experience more severe forms of spousal violence, eg., hit with an object, beaten, choked, or have their spouse use or threaten to use a gun or knife against them
- more likely to report the incident to police (36% versus 25%), which is contrary to findings of past research
- more likely to use victim services (45% versus 32%) despite the fact that only 24 per cent of victim service agencies across Canada were able to provide services to persons with disabilities.

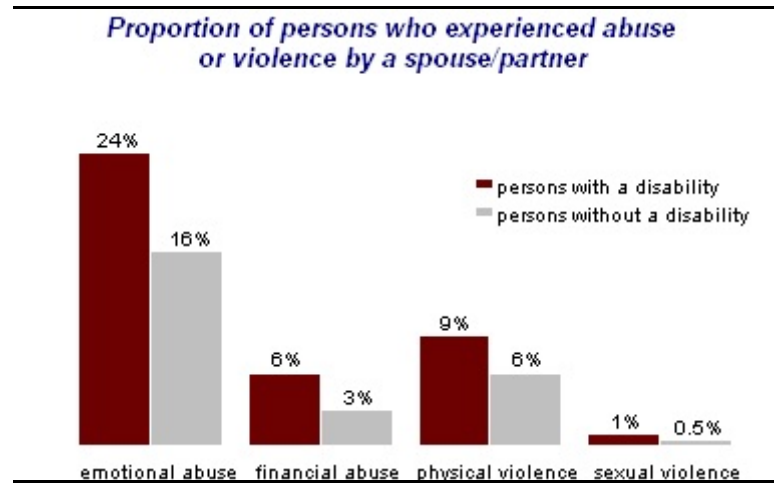


Figure 5.

Among persons who had experienced spousal violence, those who had disabilities were:

- more likely to be injured (39% versus 30%)
- more likely to require medical attention (14% versus 7%)
- less able to attend to their daily activities (31% versus 18%)
- more likely to fear for their lives as a result of the spousal violence.

**Racially visible and immigrant women:** According to the 2004 GSS, rates of spousal assault for racially visible women in Canada are the same as or slightly lower than for non-racially visible women. Rates of spousal violence were also found to be lower among immigrant women in Canada, compared to non-immigrants. According to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, one of the reasons why rates of spousal violence may be lower among immigrant women is that a larger proportion of the immigrant population is aged 45 years and older compared to the non-immigrant population and, as seen above, younger women are at greater risk of experiencing spousal violence than older women. Immigrant women are also more likely to be married.<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that the 2004 GSS was only conducted with those who speak English or French and therefore may undercount the rate of spousal violence among immigrant women. (See also page 30 for other data limitations.)

It is important to keep in mind that, while racially visible and immigrant women didn't report higher levels of intimate partner violence on the 2004 GSS, they may face particular barriers and have different needs in terms of interventions and services which need to be culturally and linguistically appropriate.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 6.**

**Aboriginal women:**

Aboriginal women in Canada are much more likely to experience intimate partner violence than non-Aboriginal women. In 2004, the five-year spousal assault rates for Aboriginal women were close to three and a half times higher than rates for non-Aboriginal women.

Not only do Aboriginal women, as a group, experience more violence, but the forms of violence they reported experiencing in the 2004 GSS were the most severe and potentially life-threatening, eg., being beaten or choked, having had a weapon used against them or being sexually assaulted.

As a result of the spousal violence they experience, Aboriginal women were also more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be physically injured, receive medical attention, or take time off daily activities. They experienced spousal violence more often (ten or more episodes from the same partner) and were more likely to fear for their lives.

Aboriginal women and men are more than twice as likely to experience emotional abuse from their spouse/partner than non-Aboriginal women and men (for women it's 37% versus 17% and for men it's 36% versus 16%).

Risk factors for violence (discussed above) including Aboriginal women's lower socio-economic status, the Aboriginal population's younger demographic profile, the higher likelihood of living in common-law relationships and higher levels of alcohol abuse all likely contribute to the rates of spousal violence committed against Aboriginal women.

According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP, 1996), social and economic exclusion, systemic discrimination, racism, poor housing, and the breakdown of healthy family life as a result of residential schooling may also contribute to high levels of violence.

## Who victims of intimate partner violence turn to for help

Disclosing spousal violence can be difficult for many victims. Overall, victims are more likely to turn to informal supports such as family and friends for help.

According to the 2004 GSS, 73 per cent of all Canadian victims confided in someone close to them with more females relying on informal supports than males.

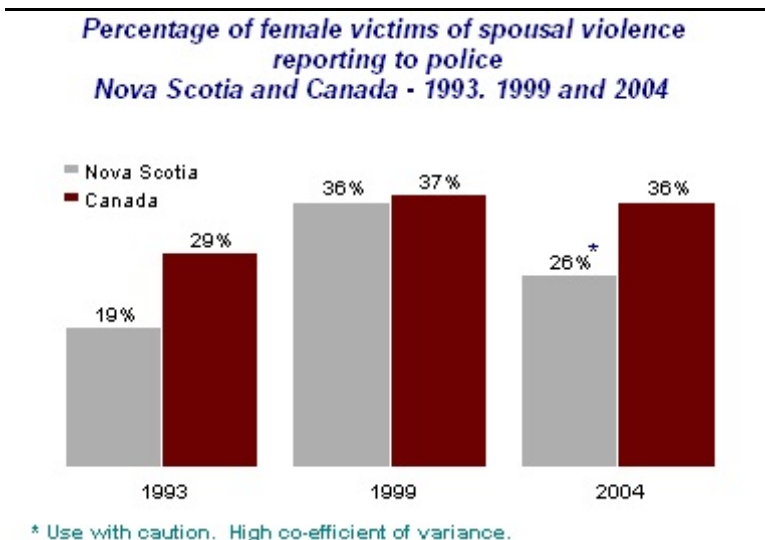
	Female victims	Male victims
Informal supports such as families, friends, neighbours	83%	60%
Formal help agencies or organizations such as shelter, crisis centre, counselor	47%	20%
No one	12%	35%

**Table 2.**

Thirty-four per cent of all Canadian victims turned to a formal help agency with more than twice as many females using these supports compared to males.

Twenty-two per cent of all victims had told no one until they disclosed the violence to the survey interviewer over the telephone. Male victims were close to three times more likely than female victims to have told no one about the violence they experienced.

## Reporting of intimate partner violence to police:



The majority of spousal violence incidents are not reported to the police. The 2004 GSS on victimization found that only 26 per cent of Nova Scotia women who had experienced intimate partner violence reported it to police.<sup>9</sup> Nationally, 36 per cent of women and 17 per cent of men who experienced intimate partner violence reported it to police.

**Figure 7.**

A number of factors can affect the likelihood of women reporting spousal violence to police and using criminal justice and social services. These include:

- awareness and availability of services
- fear of reprisals by the offender, family, community
- reluctance due to shame or embarrassment
- fear of negative public reaction
- linguistic, cultural or physical barriers to services
- financial barriers to services (including transportation, access to phone, etc.)
- potential impact on custody of children
- fear of revictimization by testifying in court
- geographic or social isolation
- dependency (eg., emotional, economic) on the perpetrator

## Highlights

### **The incidence and nature of intimate partner violence: What police-reported data on spousal violence and homicides tell us...**

There were 826 incidents of spousal violence reported to police in **Nova Scotia** in 2007, 174 (or 27%) more than were reported in 2006. We don't know if this is an actual increase in the incidence or if this is due to more reporting by victims.

In 2007, **Nova Scotia's** rate of police-reported spousal violence was below the national rate (145 vs 188 per 100,000 population) but was the highest in the Atlantic provinces.

While **Nova Scotia's** overall rate was 145 per 100,000 population, the rate for females was close to three and a half times greater than the rate for males in the province (221 versus 64).

Between 1991 and 2007, there were 280 homicides in **Nova Scotia** of which women and girls comprised 32 per cent of victims (89 females). More than half (58 per cent) of female victims of homicide in **Nova Scotia** were killed by their spouses or intimate partners, compared to 9 per cent of male victims.

Women in **Nova Scotia** are about 45 times more likely to be killed by a spouse or intimate partner than they are by a stranger (57.9 per cent versus 1.3 per cent).

Men in **Nova Scotia** are more likely to be killed by a stranger than they are to be killed by a spouse or intimate partner (13.6 per cent versus 9.3 per cent).

In **Canada**, rates of spousal homicide are higher for those in common-law relationships, among those who have recently separated and for young adults, particularly young women. Rates of spousal homicides are also much higher among Aboriginal women and men.

## Police-reported spousal violence

The Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics produces an annual statistical profile, *Family Violence in Canada*. Its primary data source is the Incident-based Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR2), which collects data from 149 police services across Canada, representing approximately 90 per cent of Canada's population in 2006. There is 100 per cent UCR2 coverage in Nova Scotia.<sup>10</sup>

*Number and rate of police-reported spousal violence incidents by sex of victim, Canada, provinces and territories, 2007*

	total number of incidents	total rate*	female rate	male rate
BC	2,456	124	197	48
AB	4,707	249	415	88
SK	2,177	329	536	116
MB	1,628	215	351	76
ON	12,561	141	225	51
QC	14,025	241	394	82
NB	410	84	137	28
NS	826	145	221	64
PE	104	128	219	31
NL	461	123	194	49
YT	86	421	749	107
NT	321	1,605	2,866	456
NU	403	2,472	4,116	945
Canada	40,165	188	305	67

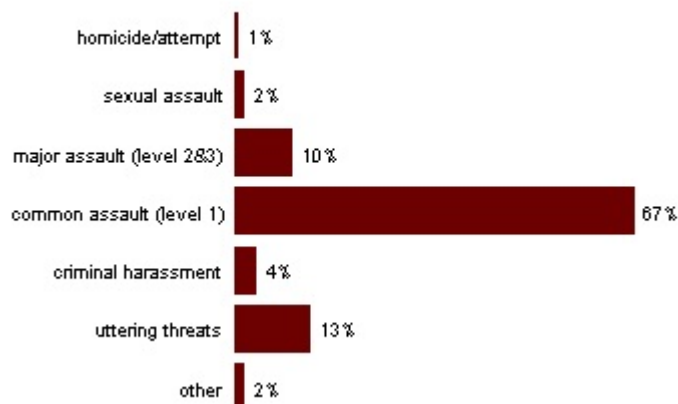
\* Rate is per 100,000 population

**Table 3.**

In Nova Scotia, there were 826 incidents of spousal violence reported to police in 2007. Rates of police-reported spousal violence vary greatly from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

The 826 incidents of spousal violence reported to Nova Scotia police in 2007 represent 6 per cent of the total violent crimes in the province. Unlike the national average which increased only slightly, Nova Scotia's police-reported incidents of spousal violence increased by 27 per cent from 2006 to 2007 (from 652 to 826). It is not clear whether this is an actual increase in the incidence of spousal violence or whether it is an increase in reporting to police.

*Intimate partner violence reported to police by offence type  
Nova Scotia, 2006*



**Figure 8.**

While Nova Scotia's rate of police-reported spousal violence (145 incidents per 100,000 population) was lower than the national rate of 188, it is the highest rate among the Atlantic provinces. The rate for women in Nova Scotia was 221 and for men it was 64 per 100,000 population.

Criminal offences that most commonly apply to cases of spousal violence include assault (common and major), uttering threats, sexual assault, criminal harassment (or stalking),

forcible confinement and homicide. Other forms of spousal abuse, such as emotional, psychological or financial abuse, often are not offences chargeable under the *Criminal Code* and as such, are not included in this review.

Of the spousal violence cases reported to police in Nova Scotia in 2006, close to two-thirds of victims (64 per cent) were between the ages of 25 and 44 years. Ten per cent of victims were under 25 years of age and 8 per cent were over the age of 55.

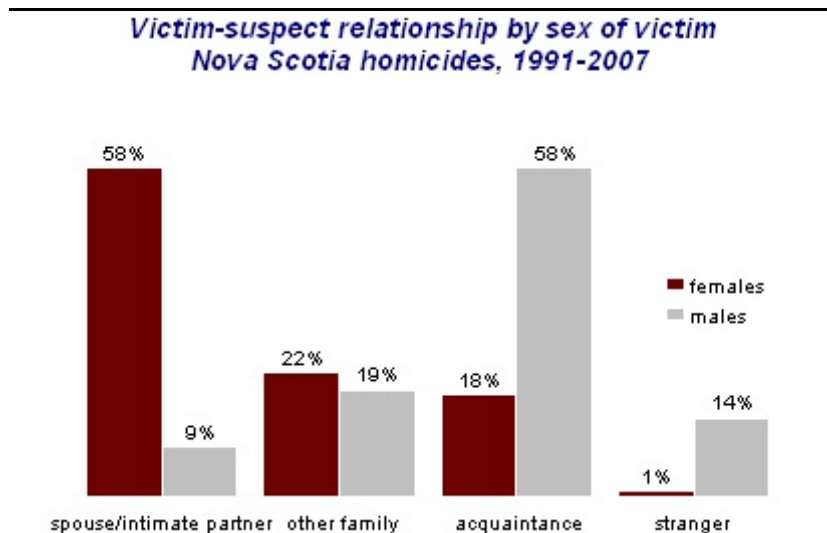
Eight-one per cent of spousal violence cases reported to police in Nova Scotia in 2006 were cleared through the laying of a charge against the accused while 11 per cent of incidents were cleared otherwise.<sup>11</sup> In more than half of cases that were cleared otherwise, the complainant declined to lay a charge.

Thirty-eight per cent of victims of spousal violence reported in 2006 were physically injured as a result of the violence. This is slightly less than in Canada where 49 per cent of victims were injured. In Nova Scotia, physical force was used in 38 per cent of spousal violence incidents and weapons were used in 6 per cent of incidents.

## **Homicides and spousal homicides**

As most homicides come to the attention of police, they provide a clear picture of violence in its most extreme form and demonstrate the difference for female and male victims of homicide.

Between 1991 and 2007, there were 280 homicides in Nova Scotia. Women and girls comprised 32 per cent of victims while boys and men comprised 68% (89 female victims and 191 male victims).



**Figure 9.**

More than half (58 per cent) of female victims were killed by their spouses or intimate partners<sup>12</sup>, compared to 9 per cent of male victims.

Women in Nova Scotia are about 45 times more likely to be killed by a spouse or intimate partner than they are to be killed by a stranger while men are more likely to be killed by a stranger than by an intimate partner or spouse.



As is the case with homicide in general, rates of spousal homicide in Canada have been declining over the last 30 years, for both women and men. Over this period, however, women have consistently been more likely than men to be victims of spousal homicide. The rate of spousal homicide against women has been three to five times higher than the rate for male victims.

### **Risk factors associated with homicide**

Rates of spousal homicide are higher for those in common-law relationships, those who have recently separated and for young adults, particularly young women. Rates of spousal homicide are also much higher among Aboriginal persons. While we do not have information for Nova Scotia, we know that the spousal homicide rate is eight times greater for Aboriginal women in Canada than it is for non-Aboriginal women. For Aboriginal men in Canada, the spousal homicide rate is 38 times greater than it is for non-Aboriginal men.

## Highlights

### Supports and services for victims of intimate partner violence:

#### Emergency Protection Orders (EPOs)

Over the past four years, there were 883 applications for EPOs made in **Nova Scotia**, an average of 221 per year. Approximately half (49 per cent) of these orders were issued, 43 per cent were denied and 8 per cent were abandoned.

Two-thirds of EPO applications had children associated with them.

A review of EPOs for the 2003-04 and 2004-05 fiscal years revealed that the number of EPOs was greater than expected in Halifax County and Pictou County.

There were 30 charges for violation of an EPO in 2003-04 and 2004-05 of which 14 were dismissed, 10 were withdrawn and 6 where an individual was sentenced.

#### Shelters

There were 1,269 admissions of women and their children to shelters across **Nova Scotia** in 2007-08, down 497 admissions (28 per cent) from 2005-06. The majority of admissions (90 per cent) were to transition houses.

Based on a one-day “snapshot” taken on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008, there were 141 residents in shelters in Nova Scotia on that day. Of these residents, 55 per cent were women and 45 per cent were dependent children. One in four shelter residents on this day had been in the shelter before.

Eighty-five per cent of women (66) residing in shelters on April 16, 2008 were victims of abuse. Of these: 85 per cent were fleeing physical abuse, 68 per cent were being abused by their current or former spouse/partner and 39 per cent were admitted with their children.

#### Victims’ services

In 2007-2008, 14 victim services agencies in **Nova Scotia** reported serving 9,892 people. This is an increase of 9 per cent in the reported number of people served compared to 2005-06, when 18 agencies reported serving 9,097 people.

In a snapshot taken on May 28, 2008, 11 victim services agencies in Nova Scotia reported serving 273 people. Of these, 58 per cent were female and more than half were victims of intimate partner violence.

## **Supports and services for victims**

### **Emergency protection orders**

Emergency protection orders (EPOs) have been available to victims of family violence in Nova Scotia since April 1, 2003 when the *Domestic Violence Intervention Act* came into effect. EPOs allow the justice system to take immediate action to protect a victim of domestic violence in an emergency situation. Among other things, an EPO can give the victim exclusive occupation of the family home for up to thirty days, temporary care and custody of a child, as well as temporary possession of specified personal property such as a car.

From 2005/06 to 2008/09, there were 883 applications for EPOs made in Nova Scotia, an average of 221 per year. Over these four years, approximately half (49 per cent) of these orders were issued, in 43 per cent of cases, orders were denied while 8 per cent of applications were abandoned. The vast majority of EPO applications (96 per cent) are made between the hours of 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. Just under two-thirds (65 per cent) of applications had children associated with them. In close to two-thirds (65 per cent) of applications, the nature of the domestic violence involved assault (33 per cent) or threats (32 per cent). In 98 per cent of cases, the applicant was the victim. For more information about EPOs see Appendix A on page 34.

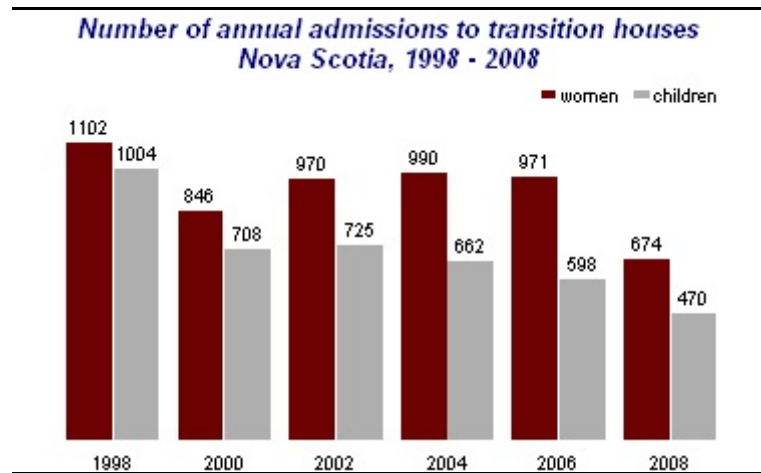
In an evaluative study of EPO applications made in the 2003-04 and 2004-05 fiscal years, it was determined that:

- One-third of the EPO application respondents were identified as having a criminal history on the date the application was filed. A majority of the cases had a history of domestic violence.
- There were certain areas of the province where the number of EPOs was greater than expected based on population figures, specifically, Halifax County and Pictou County, while for the counties of Cape Breton and Lunenburg, the number of EPOs was smaller than expected.
- There were 13 Justices of the Peace identified as having processed EPO applications with the median number of applications handled being 43.
- Most applications are made within one week of the triggering incident.
- For those applications where an EPO was issued, it was usually set for a period of 30 days.
- The most frequently occurring provisions in the orders were: committing no further acts of domestic violence; no communication with the victim; a publication ban; and, staying away from the place of residence of the victim.
- The majority of victims were female while the majority of the respondents were male.

## Shelters

- According to the *Transition Home Survey* conducted by Statistics Canada, there were 16 shelters providing residential services for abused women in Nova Scotia in 2007-08. This is one fewer than in 2005-06, when the last survey was conducted. Of the 16 shelters providing services, 14 participated in the survey.
- In Nova Scotia, 69 per cent (9) of shelters reporting in the 2007-2008 survey were transition homes providing short- to moderate-term housing and 25 per cent (4) were second-stage housing facilities, which offer long-term housing. There was only one emergency type facility in operation in the province.

There were 1,269 admissions of women and their children to shelters across Nova Scotia between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008. This is a decrease of 28 per cent (497 admissions) from 2005-06, when there was one more shelter in operation. The majority of shelter admissions (90 per cent) were to transition houses.



**Figure 10.**

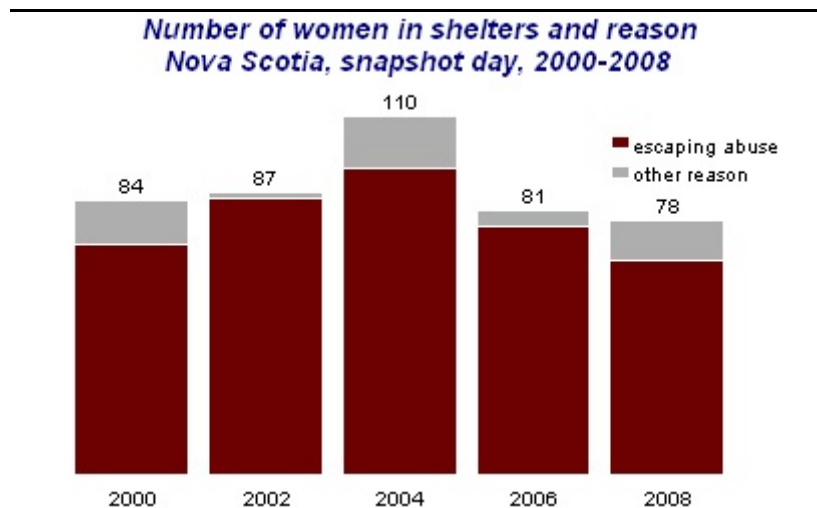
- Of those admitted to shelters in 2007-08, 59 per cent were women and 41 per cent were children, which is similar to the proportions from 2005-06.
- While Nova Scotia has a lower rate of spousal violence than the national average (145 per 100,000 population vs. 188 per 100,000 population), the number of shelters per capita in Nova Scotia is on par with Canada overall (7 per 100,000 married, common law and separated women). However, among the Atlantic provinces, Nova Scotia has the highest rate of police-reported spousal violence and the lowest number of shelters per capita.
- Three-quarters of shelters in Nova Scotia served urban/suburban populations, 44 per cent served rural/village populations and 44 per cent served populations living on-reserve.
- In Nova Scotia, all shelters offered advocacy and the majority provided the following in-house services to women residents: safety or protection planning (94 per cent), housing referral (94 per cent), individual short-term counselling (88 per cent), parenting skills training (88 per cent), transportation and accompaniment (88 per cent) and group counselling (81 per cent). Many of the facilities in Nova Scotia also provided similar in-house services to non-resident women in need of assistance.

- The majority of facilities in Nova Scotia also offered in-house services to resident children including individual short-term counselling (81 per cent), group counselling (81 per cent), culturally sensitive services for Aboriginal children (69 per cent) and indoor and outdoor recreation spaces (69 per cent).
- There was a slight increase in the number of outreach hours provided to non-residents by shelters, from 48 hours per shelter per week in 2005-06 to 50 hours in 2007-08.

*Based on a one-day “snapshot” of shelter residents, taken on April 16, 2008...*

- There were 141 residents in shelters in Nova Scotia on that day. Of these residents, 55 per cent were women and 45 per cent were dependent children.

- In Nova Scotia, 85 per cent of women (66) residing in shelters on April 16, 2008, were victims of abuse. This is lower than the percentage from a similar snapshot day in 2006, when 94 per cent of women (76) residing in shelters in Nova Scotia were there to escape abuse. Since 2000, the proportion of women in Nova Scotia shelters on snapshot day that were there for reasons of abuse has ranged from 85 per cent to 98 per cent.



**Figure 11.**

- In Nova Scotia, 85 per cent of women admitted as a result of abuse were fleeing physical abuse, 74 per cent psychological abuse, 62 per cent threats, 35 per cent harassment, 33 per cent financial abuse, and 21 per cent sexual abuse.
- Thirty-nine per cent of women escaping abusive situations in Nova Scotia were admitted with their children, which is lower than the national average. Nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) of these children were under 10 years of age.
- In Nova Scotia, women admitted with children indicated that they were protecting their children from psychological abuse in 83 per cent of cases, from witnessing the abuse of their mother (63 per cent), physical abuse (63 per cent), neglect (54 per cent), threats (46 per cent), and sexual abuse (43 per cent).

- In Nova Scotia, 68 per cent of abused women residing in shelters on that day indicated that their current or former spouse/partner was the abuser, down from 85 per cent in 2006.
- Self-referral was the most common source of referral for women residing in shelters in Nova Scotia on April 16, 2008. The percentage self-referring in Nova Scotia was substantially higher than for the other Atlantic provinces and Canada as a whole, as well as the 2006 snapshot day when only 23 per cent of those residing in shelters in Nova Scotia were self-referred.
- Between 2006 and 2008, there was a small drop, from 31 per cent to 25 per cent, in the percentage of women residing in shelters on snapshot day that had used the shelter before. Among those who were there before, 15 per cent had been there on one prior occasion within the last year and another 10 per cent had been there 2 to 4 times. For 55 per cent of repeat residents, it had been more than 12 months since their last stay.
- It's important to note that very few women who experience abuse actually use shelters. The 2004 GSS estimates that only 11 per cent of abused women in Canada used a shelter.

## **Victim Services**

*Based on a one-day "snapshot" of victims, taken on May 28, 2008...*

- Eleven victim services agencies in Nova Scotia reported serving 273 people on snapshot day. Of these, 58 per cent were identified as female, a decline from 70 per cent in 2006.
- More than half (57 per cent) of the people who received services were victims of intimate partner violence.
  - Of the 17 victims of sexual assault, 35 per cent were victimized by a spouse, an ex-spouse or an intimate partner.
  - Of the 157 victims of other violent offences, 62 per cent were victimized by a spouse, an ex-spouse or an intimate partner.
  - Of the 15 victims of criminal harassment, 87 per cent were victimized by a spouse, an ex-spouse or an intimate partner.

According to the *Victim Services Survey* conducted by Statistics Canada, 14 victim services agencies in Nova Scotia reported serving 9,892 people between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008. This is an increase of 9 per cent in the reported number of people served since 2005-06, when 18 agencies reported serving 9,097 people<sup>13</sup>.

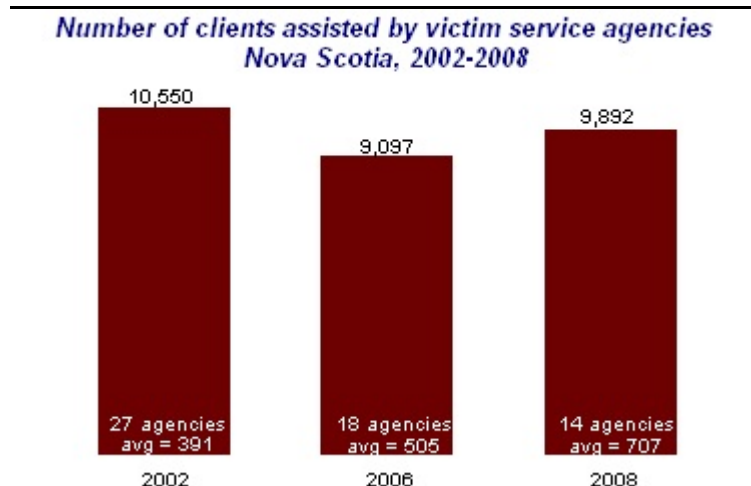


Figure 12.

- Twelve of the Nova Scotian agencies reported having at least one building entrance that was wheelchair accessible.
- Ten of the agencies reported being able to provide services to people who are deaf or hearing impaired and nine reported being able to accommodate clients who are blind or visually impaired.
- In Nova Scotia, the most commonly reported direct services provided by victim service agencies were: liaising with other agencies on behalf of client (79 per cent), immediate safety planning (79 per cent), emotional support (71 per cent), long term safety planning (71 per cent), and risk assessment (71 per cent).
- Nova Scotia's criminal injuries counselling program reported approving 216 out of 276 applications (or 78 per cent) for counselling. Of the approved applicants, 79 per cent were female victims and 21 per cent were male victims. Seventy-three percent of approved applicants in 2007-08 were over the age of 18.
- Ninety-eight percent of approved applications in Nova Scotia were for victims of crimes against the person, such as assaults and sexual assaults, which is similar to 2005-06.

## Highlights

### **The long-term consequences of intimate partner violence: What research tells us...**

The short and longer term impacts of intimate partner violence are substantial and far-reaching.

The links between intimate partner violence and **physical and mental health** have been clearly established. Victims and their children are at risk of serious physical injury. Studies have shown that victims of intimate partner violence are more likely to experience low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and post-traumatic stress disorder. Additionally, some people who are exposed to family violence may cope with the situation and their feelings in ways that may be harmful to their health, eg., through substance abuse, self-harming behaviours and high-risk sexual practices.

People who are homeless are much more likely to have experienced (first hand or witnessed) family violence than those who are not homeless. Researchers have consistently found “exceptionally high” rates of family violence in the backgrounds of homeless people, leading some to conclude that family violence may be a major cause of **homelessness**.

Family violence is a common antecedent for **institutional experiences** such as involvement with the child welfare system or out-of-home placement during childhood as well as for psychiatric hospitalizations (especially women) and incarceration (especially men).

The **economic costs** of intimate partner violence are also great, both for victims and their families and for society as a whole. Factors such as increased absenteeism, loss of jobs, frequent moves, and the foregoing of financial security during divorce proceedings to avoid further abuse, all contribute to the economic situations of victims, in both the short and longer term.

The economic costs to society are also very high. A recent study has estimated that the national annual cost for those who have left abusive partners within the last three years was \$3.1 billion. This primarily included costs related to health, shelters and other victim services, as well as legal and social assistance.



## **Long-term health and socio-economic impacts:**

People who have experienced family violence include those who have been abused as well as those who have witnessed violence within the family, often children. In both cases, the short and longer term impacts can be substantial and far-reaching. Some of these are discussed briefly below.

**Health:** The links between intimate partner violence and physical and mental health have been clearly established. Victims of physical abuse are at risk of injury of various kinds, some of which can be permanently disfiguring and even lethal. Physical violence between parents also puts children, particularly infants who may be in a parent's arms during a violent incident, at risk of physical injury.

Numerous studies have shown that victims of intimate partner violence are more likely to experience low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts and post-traumatic stress disorder. Additionally, some people who are exposed to family violence may cope with the situation and their feelings in ways that may be harmful to their health, eg., through substance abuse, self-harming behaviours and high-risk sexual practices. Exposure, particularly long-term exposure, to stress has also been shown to have a negative impact on health and to exacerbate health conditions such as lupus, fibromyalgia, and chronic pain.<sup>14</sup>

**Homelessness:** People who are homeless are much more likely to have experienced (first hand or witnessed) family violence than those who are not homeless. Researchers have consistently found “exceptionally high” rates of family violence in the backgrounds of homeless people, leading some to conclude that family violence may be a major cause of homelessness.

Victims of family violence are thought to comprise a significant proportion of the hidden or relatively homeless. For example, the majority of women who flee abusive relationships do not use a women's shelter. Many will stay with friends or relatives, moving from one short-term arrangement to another, and frequently returning to the abusive home environment.

The lack of affordable housing and difficulties in accessing subsidized housing are significant barriers preventing abused women and their children from leaving abusive situations and becoming stably housed. Statistics Canada estimates that approximately one-third of victims who flee violent homes remain homeless or unstably housed for prolonged periods.<sup>15</sup>

**Involvement with justice system and other institutional experiences:** As was the case for (and related to) homelessness, family violence is a common antecedent for institutional experiences such as involvement with the child welfare system or out-of-home placement during childhood as well as for psychiatric hospitalizations (especially women) and incarceration (especially men).

In a survey conducted by the Nova Scotia Department of Justice of all “on-register” offenders

(October 7, 2006), 75 per cent of youth and 55 per cent of adults reported having experienced some form of family violence. Of these, more than half of the youth (56 per cent) and 81 per cent of the adults stated that they had been subjected to abuse by a family member more than ten times in their lives. The most frequent type of abuse reported by youth offenders was being beaten (22 per cent); for adult offenders it was being forced into unwanted sexual activity (12 per cent) and being beaten (12 per cent).

**Economic costs of abuse:** The physical and social costs of abuse (some of which are described above) are immense in terms of human suffering, family and societal breakdown, and overall decline in quality of life.

The economic costs are also great, both for victims and their families and for society as a whole. Factors such as increased absenteeism, loss of jobs, frequent moves, and the foregoing of financial security during divorce proceedings to avoid further abuse, all contribute to the economic situations of victims, in both the short and longer term.

The economic costs that abuse has on society are difficult to assess with certainty. A number of Canadian studies have attempted to estimate partial economic costs related to violence against women. One of the most recent, the Women's Health Effects study (based on 2004 Ontario costs), estimated that the national annual cost for those who have left abusive partners within the last three years was \$3.1 billion. This primarily included costs related to health, shelters and other victim services, as well as legal and social assistance but did not include costs such as days off from work due to illness and monthly medication costs so is a conservative estimate. The women in this study had been living apart from their abuser for an average of 20 months but 40 per cent were still experiencing abuse from their ex- partner, emphasizing that health costs of violence continue long after leaving.<sup>16</sup>

## Highlights

### **What happens once intimate partner violence gets reported to police in Nova Scotia? Findings from the Intimate Partner Violence Tracking Project:**

The Nova Scotia Intimate Partner Violence Tracking Project (IPVTP) is a unique project in Canada that tracks cases of intimate partner violence through the criminal justice system. In the most recent phase of the IPVTP, 12,475 incidents of intimate partner violence (on average 8 per day) were reported to police in Nova Scotia in a four-year period (2000-2003).

Analysis of a subset of these incidents showed that the vast majority (85 per cent) of victims were female and that girlfriend/boyfriend relationships made up close to half of cases. The average age of both victims and suspects was in the mid thirties.

The most common offences were physical assault and criminal harassment, with force being used in more than two-thirds of cases. Thirty-six per cent of victims sustained injuries.

Close to half of cases had a prior history of domestic violence and 37 per cent involved the use of alcohol and/or drugs. Children were present in 30 per cent of incidents.

From this phase of the IPVTP, we also know that:

- police units were dispatched in 89 per cent of incidents
- it took, on average, 9 minutes for police in Nova Scotia to arrive on scene
- police laid charges in 72 per cent of incidents and three-quarters of suspects were charged with physical assault
- in cases where charges were laid, it took an average of 31 days until the accused's first appearance in court
- the average case-processing time (from first court appearance to final outcome) was 207 days, a significant increase from previous phases of the IPVTP
- police made referrals to victims' services in 89 per cent of incidents
- the overall conviction rate for spousal violence offenders was 54 per cent
- sixty-two per cent of those convicted of spousal violence received terms of probation and 20 per cent received custodial sentences
- the most frequent treatment condition imposed on supervised orders of probation was anger management and/or spousal abuse programs followed by substance abuse referrals
- of those that received custodial sentences, the median sentence length was 60 days.

A recent (2009) examination of male offenders in Nova Scotia's provincial correctional facilities shows how extensive the problem of intimate partner violence is. A one-day snapshot of the 402 adult male offenders revealed that just under one-third were in custody for domestic violence. Of these, 100 (78 per cent) were considered to be at high risk of lethality.

## **Findings from the Nova Scotia Intimate Partner Violence Tracking Project:**

The Nova Scotia Intimate Partner Violence Tracking Project (IPVTP) is a unique project in Canada that tracks cases of intimate partner violence through the criminal justice system. Police agencies in the province are provided with questionnaires and asked to provide detailed information including the nature of the incident, suspect/victim demographics, response times and the nature of criminal charges laid. For occurrences that result in criminal charges being laid, linkages are made to the courts to determine the outcomes of the charges, and to Victim Services to determine the source of the referral. Where findings of guilt are made, information on sanctions imposed is collected. Thus far, there have been three phases of data collection for this project: The first conducted between April 1 and September 30, 1992; the second during fiscal year 1996-97; and the third between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2003. A fourth phase of data collection is currently underway. The findings below come primarily from the third phase of the project, published in 2005 (henceforth, the 2005 study). Please refer to Appendix B on page 35 for a summary of indicators for all three phases of the IPVTP.

### **Incidents reported to police:**

- 12,475<sup>17</sup> incidents of domestic violence were reported to police in Nova Scotia during the four years covered by the 2005 study, or approximately 8 incidents reported per day. A breakdown of incidents by region<sup>18</sup> follows:

<b>Region</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Rate (per 10,000 population)</b>
Halifax	6487	52%	3.6
South-West	873	7%	1.6
Valley	749	6%	1.1
North	2121	17%	2.7
Cape Breton	2246	18%	3.2

- The highest rates of domestic violence were reported in the Halifax Region while the lowest were reported in the Annapolis Valley area.
- The volume of domestic violence incidents reported to police generally rose in the spring and peaked in the summer months. Thereafter, they declined and reached their lowest levels in December.
- The greatest volume of calls (39%) were reported to police between 6 p.m. and midnight.

A randomly selected sample was drawn from the total number of incidents reported to police for the 2005 study. The sample of 939 incidents was further analyzed to determine: police response times, charges laid, characteristics of the incident, case processing times, court outcomes, sentencing, and referral to Victim Services.

**Police response:**

- Police units were dispatched in 89 per cent of incidents (840 of 939). The two main reasons for not dispatching units were: that the incident was deemed to be a non-emergency (64 per cent or 63 incidents) or that the complainant came to the police office to report the incident (22 per cent or 22 incidents).
- On average, it took police in Nova Scotia nine minutes, from the time the incident was first reported, to arrive on scene. This was two minutes less than the average overall response time reported in 1998.

**Average and median police response times to intimate partner violence incidents in Nova Scotia – 1998 and 2005**

Police Agency	1998		2005	
	Average	Median	Average	Median
Halifax Regional Police	9 min	6 min	9 min	6 min
Cape Breton Regional	5 min	4 min	7 min	6 min
Other municipa <sup>19</sup>	4 min	10 min	6 min	4 min
R.C.M.P.	26 min	15 min	16 min	11 min
Overall	11 min	7 min	9 min	6 min

- As can be seen from the table above, the RCMP was the only agency reporting a reduction in response times between 1998 and 2005. HRM reported no change, while Cape Breton and other municipal police agencies reported slight increases.

**Charges laid:**

- Police laid charges in 72 per cent of incidents, which is a slight increase from 68 per cent in 1998.
- Among the incidents where charges were laid, 75 percent of suspects were charged with physical assault. Charges involving threats/harassment were laid in 26 per cent of cases and charges for breaches of recognizance/probation were laid in 25 per cent of cases.
- The top three reasons for not laying a charge were: the incident was unfounded<sup>20</sup> (54 per

cent); insufficient evidence (28 per cent) and hostile victim (10 per cent). In the majority of incidents determined to be unfounded or non-criminal (82 per cent), the incidents were described as “disturbances” (verbal arguing, shouting, etc).

- Thirty-four per cent of victims in the 2005 study indicated to police that they wanted charges laid, a decline of 11 percentage points from 1998.
- Mutual or joint charging occurred in 8 per cent of incidents. This is virtually unchanged from 1998.

### **Victim referrals by police:**

- Police referral rates to various victims’ services have increased substantially over time. In the 2005 study, police made referrals in 89 per cent of all incidents. This rose to 92 per cent in cases where police had laid charges. In comparison, the referral rate by police in the 1998 study was 61 per cent overall and 66 per cent in cases where police had laid charges.

### **Characteristics of the victims, suspects and incidents:**

**Gender:** In 85 per cent of the incidents, the victim was female and the suspect was male while in 14 per cent of incidents, the victim was male and the suspect was female.

**Victim-suspect relationship:** Girlfriend/boyfriend relationships (current and ex) accounted for 48 per cent of incidents in the 2005 study, up from 31 per cent in 1998. Marital and common-law relationships (current and ex) accounted for 52 per cent of incidents in 2005, down from 70 per cent in 1998.

**Age:** Victims ranged in age from 16 to 73, with an average age of 33 years. Suspects ranged in age from 17 to 76 with an average age of 35 years. Five per cent of suspects and 4 per cent of victims were over the age of 55 years.

**Type of offence:** The most common type of offence coming to the attention of police was physical assault (43 per cent), followed by threats/harassment (17 percent). This has remained fairly consistent over time.

**Use of force and weapons:** It was determined that force was used in 70 per cent of incidents analyzed. In incidents where force was used, 85 per cent involved physical force only, one per cent involved firearms, five per cent involved knives, and the remaining nine per cent involved other weapons, eg., sticks, bats, blunt objects.

**Level of injury:** Overall, 36 per of victims and 7 per cent of suspects sustained injuries as a result of the incident. Injuries were more common in incidents where force was used. Ten per cent of victims sustained injuries requiring medical treatment at a hospital and another 41 per cent sustained minor physical injuries.

**History of domestic violence:** Forty-six per cent of incidents had a prior history of domestic violence involving the same partner, 4 per cent higher than in 1998.

**Children witnessing domestic violence:** In 30 per cent of incidents, children under the age of 16 were in the home at the time the violence occurred.

**Use of alcohol/drugs:** Thirty-seven per cent of incidents involved drugs, alcohol, or both.

## **Court response:**

### **Case processing times:**

- In cases where charges were laid, it took an average of 31 days from when the incident was first reported to police until the accused's first appearance in court. The median time was 19 days, indicating that half of cases made it to court within 19 days of the matter being reported to police.
- Case processing times for spousal/intimate partner assault increased by 92 days (or three months) between 1998 and 2005. In 1998, it took on average 115 days from first court appearance to final outcome. By 2005, the average was 207 days and the median was 164 days. This increase in case processing times is not unique to family violence cases and reflects an overall increasing trend in criminal case processing. It is, however, important to note that the increase in case processing times for spousal abuse cases is higher than the overall increase in case processing times (53 per cent versus 30 per cent). Case processing times were highest in the HRM area (246 days on average) and lowest in the Southwest region (98 days on average).

### **Court outcomes:**

- Conviction rates for cases of domestic violence in Nova Scotia have remained relatively stable. In 2005, the overall conviction rate for offenders was 54 per cent. When pending cases, warrants and stays are excluded, the conviction rate increased to 62 per cent. The same adjusted conviction rate in the 1998 study was slightly higher at 65 per cent, not a statistically significant difference.

### **Dismissed or withdrawn cases:**

- A total of 195 cases were dismissed or withdrawn during the 2005 study period. The top four reasons why cases were dismissed or withdrawn were: victim recanted or refused to attend court; unable to serve subpoena; insufficient evidence; and peace bond entered into with victim's consent.

### **Sentence outcomes:**

- In the 2005 study, probation (62 per cent) and custody (20 per cent) were the two most common sentences. As some of the probation orders carried supervision, these two sentences combined represented a supervision rate of 71 per cent. This is similar to sentencing outcomes from the 1998 report where the supervision rate was 69 per cent.
- The most frequent treatment condition imposed on supervised orders was anger management and/or spousal abuse programs (57 per cent) followed by substance abuse referrals (43 per cent) and mental health referrals (18 per cent).
- In the 2005 study, a total of 20 per cent of persons convicted of intimate partner violence received a custody term. In the 1998 study it was 19 per cent. The median sentence length in 2005 was 60 days. This is a significant increase over the median of 41 days reported in 1998. Current data limitations do not make it possible to determine whether the increased sentence lengths are linked to the level of injury suffered or a repeat pattern of violence.

### **Domestic violence and the offender population in Nova Scotia:**

A one-day snapshot of the 539 “on-register” offenders (466 adults and 73 youth) in custody in Nova Scotia on October 7, 2006 revealed the following:

- 75 per cent of the youth and 55 per cent of the adult offenders reported having experienced some form of family violence
- Types of violence reported ranged from threats to sexual assaults/abuse. For youth, the most frequent type of abuse reported was being beaten (22%) and for adult offenders it was being forced into unwanted sexual activity (12%) and being beaten (12%).
- Fifty-six per cent of youth and 81 per cent of adult offenders stated that they had been subjected to abuse by a family member more than 10 times in their lives.

In 2009, a one-day snapshot of the 402 adult male offenders in Nova Scotia’s provincial correctional facilities revealed that just under one-third (129 offenders or 32%) were in custody for domestic violence. Of these, 100 (78 per cent) were considered to be at high risk of lethality while 29 (22 per cent) were at lower risk.



## **Identified data gaps and limitations:**

While this document endeavours to provide a picture of intimate partner violence in Nova Scotia, statistics cannot give us a 100 per cent complete or comprehensive picture of such a broad and complex subject. What follows is a description of the data gaps and limitations. It is the intention of the Coordinating Committee on Domestic Violence to work towards addressing these gaps and limitations.

As was noted on page one, statistics which describe the population as a whole do not necessarily accurately describe diverse sub-groups within that population, such as Aboriginal or African Nova Scotian women in Nova Scotia. Care should be taken not to assume the situation of all women in Nova Scotia is the same.

### **Victimization data:**

The victimization data from the *General Social Survey* (GSS) conducted by Statistics Canada is most detailed at the national level. Due to limitations of sample size, there is relatively little data available at the provincial level other than overall rates of spousal violence and a few other key statistics. Detailed analysis is not generally available at the provincial level, nor is there any information about diverse groups or communities within the province.

The GSS is a telephone survey, only conducted in English and French, which means the experiences of certain groups have not been included, eg., people who don't speak English or French and those without land line telephones. The most recent (2008) statistics on residential telephone usage indicates that approximately 1 per cent of households in Nova Scotia have no telephone of any kind and that close to 7 per cent of households in Nova Scotia have a cell phone only. Furthermore, 30 per cent of households comprised solely of 18-34 year olds have cell phones only. Given that younger adults also have higher rates of intimate partner violence, the fact that increasingly larger proportions of young adults cannot be included as participants in surveys such as the GSS on victimization is a limitation.

### **Police-reported data:**

While the police-reported data is very useful, it is important to bear in mind the majority (close to three-quarters) of women in Nova Scotia who experience intimate partner violence, do not report the violence to police.

Another limitation is the police-reported statistics on spousal violence published annually by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics only include current and former marital and common-law relationships. Boyfriend/girlfriend relationships are not included.

According to the most recent Nova Scotia Intimate Partner Violence Tracking Project, close to half of incidents of intimate partner violence reported to police in Nova Scotia between 2000 and 2003 involved current and ex boyfriends and girlfriends. Thus, the police-reported statistics

that are published annually represent only a fraction of the actual number of incidents of intimate partner violence that occur in Canada and Nova Scotia.

**Other limitations:**

As was the case with much of the victimization data, other research quoted in this document provide only a national perspective. Data collection methods typically used (eg., telephone survey for the GSS) may also effect response rates from certain segments of the population, eg., African Nova Scotians, immigrants, and Aboriginal persons. Distrust of government/ researchers and cultural differences in communication styles and preferences, among other factors, impact the cross-cultural validity of survey methods and indicate the need for culturally competent data gathering methods. Further research and consultation are required to better understand this issue.

This document pulls together statistics on intimate partner violence, primarily from a justice perspective. It is hoped that this profile will not only be updated as new data become available, but also expanded to include data from the perspectives of the other departments and agencies that make up the Coordinating Committee on Domestic Violence.

## **Report Summary:**

Victimization statistics indicate that while similar proportions of women and men report experiencing intimate partner violence, both the extent and the severity of violence that women experience are greater and, as a result, women are more likely than men to suffer greater physical and emotional consequences as a result. Additionally, research tells us that men and women appear to have different motivations for perpetrating violence against an intimate partner, with women being more likely than men to perpetrate this kind of violence in retaliation or self-defence.

Factors such as marital separation, the presence of emotional abuse in a relationship and alcohol use, among others, are linked to heightened risk for intimate partner violence. Due to an interplay of many marginalizing factors, certain groups in our society, including young women, women and men with disabilities and Aboriginal women are particularly vulnerable to abuse and victimization. Both the frequency and severity of intimate partner violence experienced by Aboriginal women in Canada, for instance, are greater than the violence non-Aboriginal women experience.

The majority of victims of intimate partner violence do not report the violence to police. Only one in four Nova Scotian women who experience spousal violence reported it to police, one of the lowest rates of reporting in the country. Victims are most likely to tell a friend or family member about the violence.

Consistent with findings from victimization surveys, we see that rates of police-reported spousal violence (per 100,000 population) are three and a half times greater for women compared to men (221 versus 64). Women are also much more likely than men to experience spousal violence in its most extreme form, spousal homicide. Women in Nova Scotia are about 45 times more likely to be killed by a spouse or intimate partner than they are to be killed by a stranger. Men are more likely to be killed by a stranger than by a spouse or intimate partner.

The short and longer term impacts of intimate partner violence are substantial and far-reaching. Research shows that there are strong and well-established links between intimate partner violence (both experiencing and witnessing it) and physical and mental health, homelessness, and institutional experiences such as psychiatric hospitalizations (particularly women) and incarceration (particularly men).

In Nova Scotia, emergency protection orders have been consistently used since their inception with an average of 220 applications per year, half of which are granted.

There has been a decline in the occupancy of Nova Scotia's transition houses in recent years. In addition to residential services, transition houses in Nova Scotia also offer advocacy and most provide a variety of goods and in-house services to women residents and non-residents.

There has been an increase in the number of people using victims' services in the province. The majority of clients using victims' services are victims of intimate partner violence.

Findings from Nova Scotia's Intimate Partner Violence Tracking Project are also consistent with what we have learned from victimization surveys and police-reported data summaries. The vast majority of victims were women; the most common offence was physical assault; there is force used in the majority of cases and injuries result in more than a third of cases. In half of cases, this was not the first incident involving the same partners. Children were present in three out of ten incidents and the use of alcohol and/or drugs was present in close to four out of ten cases. The indicators from the tracking project show that there have been a number of improvements in police and court response to intimate partner violence (see Appendix B on page 35). While improvements are still required in a number of areas, there is evidence the justice system is more responsive to intimate partner violence in Nova Scotia than was the case in the past.

## Appendix A

### Emergency Protection Orders – Statistics for Nova Scotia – 2005/06 to 2008/09

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Total	
					#	%
<b>Total applications</b>	230	231	217	205	883	100
<b>Orders issued</b>	113	133	95	93	434	49
<b>Orders denied</b>	109	77	99	95	380	43
<b>Orders abandoned</b>	8	21	23	17	69	8
<b>Applications 9am to 9pm</b>	213	220	212	202	847	96
<b>Applications 9pm to 9am</b>	17	11	5	3	36	4
<b>Applications with children</b>	167	161	120	125	573	65
<b>Applications with custody order</b>	0	0	0	0	0	–
<b>Applications where Family Services contacted</b>	57	26	18	4	105	12
<b>Nature of domestic violence:</b>						
<b>Assault</b>	93	87	53	60	293	33
<b>Threat</b>	74	68	71	68	281	32
<b>Forced physical confinement</b>	32	29	20	25	106	12
<b>Sexual assault</b>	9	8	5	10	32	4
<b>Collective series of acts</b>	81	64	57	56	258	29
<b>Applicant category:</b>						
<b>Transition house designate</b>	11	1	2	1	15	2
<b>Victim</b>	217	229	213	204	863	98
<b>Victim designate</b>	2	1			3	–
<b>Peace officer</b>			2		2	–

Source: NS Dept of Justice, Victims Services

## Appendix B

The following table is a summary from the Nova Scotia Intimate Partner Violence Tracking Project that assesses how well the criminal justice system in Nova Scotia has responded to the issue of domestic violence over the past decade.

Item	1995*	1998*	2005*
A. Police response rates to spousal /intimate partner incidents	83%	85%	89%
B. Median police response time to incidents	9 Minutes	7 Minutes	6 Minutes
C. Police arrested suspects at scene	34%	47%	60%
D. Police cleared by charge rate <sup>21</sup>	44%	68%	72%
E. Threat charges as a % of all charges laid by police	13%	22%	23%
F. Threat charges as a % of all persons charged by police	20%	22%	23%
G. Time elapsed from first court appearance to final outcome	5 Months	4 Months	7 Months
H. Court case outcomes	57% Guilty	65% Guilty	62% Guilty
I. Threat charge outcomes	35% Guilty	45% Guilty	34% Guilty
J. Frequency of penalties by case:** Probation	82%	83%	80%
Custody	28%	19%	20%
Fine	21%	30%	9%
K. Probation			
% of probationers with a spouse abuse program referral	35%	44%	57% <sup>22</sup>
% of probationers with a non-association clause	23%	53%	28%
% of probationers with a substance abuse referral	19%	47%	43%
L. Likelihood (based on number of reported incidents) of:			
Being charged	44%	68%	72%
Being convicted	25%	38%	39%
Being incarcerated	7%	7%	8%
M. Referral rates to the Dept. of Justice's Victim Services	N/A	61%	74%

\*\* Of the 362 convictions, probation was employed as a sanction either alone or in conjunction in 288 cases. With respect to custody it was 73/362 (20%) and fines 34/362 (9%).

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Use estimate of number of male victims with caution as the coefficient of variation is high, ie., 16.6 per cent to 33.3 per cent.
- <sup>2</sup> Source: Morgan, A. and Chadwick, H. (2009). *Key issues in domestic violence*. Research in Practice - Summary paper no. 7, Australian Institute of Criminology.
- <sup>3</sup> Source: Kernsmith P. (2005). *Exerting power or striking back: a gendered comparison of motivations for domestic violence perpetration*. *Violence and Victims*, Apr;20(2):173-85.
- <sup>4</sup> Source: Hamberger, L.K., Lohr, J.M., Bonge, D., and Tolin, D.F. (1997). *An empirical classification of motivations for domestic violence*. *Violence Against Women*, Aug;3(4):401-23
- <sup>5</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. (2001). Spousal violence after marital separation. *Juristat*, Catalogue no. 85-002-XIE, vol. 21, no.7.
- <sup>6</sup> Use this data with caution as co-efficient of variation is high (16.6% to 33.3%). It was not known whether gays, lesbians, or bisexuals who were victims of spousal violence were in a same-sex or heterosexual relationship at the time of the abuse. Stats are based on gay, lesbian or bisexual respondents who had a current or ex spouse/partner with whom they had contact within the last five years. Also note that the difference between the proportion of gays/lesbians and bisexuals who experienced spousal violence is not statistically significant.
- <sup>7</sup> Source: Perreault, S. (2008). *Immigrants and Victimization, 2004*. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Profile Series. Catalogue # 85F0033M - No. 18.
- <sup>8</sup> Source: Statistics Canada (2006). *Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006*, catalogue no. 85-570-XIE.
- <sup>9</sup> This statistic was obtained via personal communication with Lucie Ogrodnik, senior analyst, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Statistics Canada, July 9, 2009. As the coefficient of variation for this statistic is high, (16.6% to 33.3%), it should be used with caution.
- <sup>10</sup> Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. (2008). *Family Violence in Canada, 2008*, Catalogue no. 85-224-X.
- <sup>11</sup> **Cleared otherwise** means that the accused was identified but was not charged for a variety of reasons. These may include cases where the complainant requests that charges not be laid against the accused, the accused has died, the accused has diplomatic immunity, the accused is referred to a diversionary program, police discretion, or for a reason beyond the control of the police.

- <sup>12</sup> Couples include legally married and common-law, separated and divorced spouses.
- <sup>13</sup> The Victim Services survey was sent to 21 agencies in Nova Scotia and responses were received from 14 of these agencies. Of these 14 agencies, 6 were police-based, 5 were system-based, one was community-based, one was a sexual assault centre and one was the criminal injuries counselling program.
- <sup>14</sup> Source: Doherty, D. for the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (2003). *Health effects of family violence: Overview paper*. Government of Canada. Catalogue no. H72-21/187-2003F.
- <sup>15</sup> Source: Novac, S. (2006). *Family violence and homelessness: A review of the literature*. Government of Canada, Catalogue no. HP20-4/2007E.
- <sup>16</sup> Source: Ford-Gilboe, Wuest, Varcoe, et al. Women's Health Effects Study, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2003-2011.
- <sup>17</sup> Note that the 12,475 incidents include boyfriend/girlfriend relationships, whereas data published by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics on police-reported spousal violence (see page 12) include only current and ex spouses and common-law partners.
- <sup>18</sup> "Regions" are roughly approximate to county boundaries and include the following: Halifax = HRM and Halifax county; Valley = Annapolis, Digby, Hants and Kings counties; South-West = Lunenburg, Queens, Shelburne and Yarmouth counties; Cape Breton = Cape Breton, Inverness, Richmond, and Victoria counties; and North-Central = Antigonish, Colchester, Cumberland, Guysborough and Pictou counties.
- <sup>19</sup> "Other municipal" forces include Amherst, Annapolis Royal, Bridgewater, Kentville, New Glasgow, Springhill, Stellarton, Trenton, Truro, and Westville.
- <sup>20</sup> "Unfounded" refers to those matters where police have determined that no offence has taken place or the matter was not criminal in nature.
- <sup>21</sup> Persons cleared by charge - This term refers to persons who have been formally charged or recommended to be charged by police. Persons can also be cleared "otherwise." This term refers to people who have not been formally charged by police, though there is sufficient evidence for the police to do so. This could occur for a number of reasons: the police used extrajudicial measures, the police may have used discretion and decided not to lay a charge, the complainant did not want police to lay a charge, the accused was involved in other incidents in which one or more charges were laid, or death of the accused.
- <sup>22</sup> It should be noted that the percentage reported here includes referrals to anger management and spouse abuse programs.



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Statistics Canada (2006). *Measuring Violence Against Women: Statistical Trends 2006*, catalogue no. 85-570-XIE.

## Sources for figures and tables

Figure 1.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics. (2001, 2005). *Family Violence in Canada, 2001, Family Violence in Canada, 2005*, Catalogue no. 85-224 (XIE).

Figure 2.

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Figure 4.

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Figure 5.

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Figure 9.

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Figure 10.

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Figure 11.

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Figure 12.

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