

Girls and Violence in Canada

Many girls and young women experience or witness violence in their lifetime.

- ◆ An estimated 235,315 child maltreatment investigations (38 per 1,000 children) were conducted in Canada in 2003. For nearly half the investigations (49%, or an estimated 114,607 child investigations) reports of maltreatment were substantiated by the investigating worker (19 per 1,000 children).¹⁴ This rate of child maltreatment (~2% of children per year) is about the same as in the United States.¹⁵
- ◆ In Canada, neglect was the most common form of substantiated maltreatment in 2003. About a third (30%) of all investigations in which maltreatment was substantiated involved neglect as the primary category of maltreatment. Exposure to domestic violence was the second most frequently substantiated category of maltreatment (28%), followed closely by physical abuse (24%). Emotional maltreatment was the primary category of substantiated maltreatment in 15% of cases, while sexual abuse cases represented 3% of all substantiated maltreatment.¹⁴ (See Figure 1.)

Girls and young women are exposed to violence in many ways.

- ◆ In 2005, the rate of sexual assault against children and youth was over five times higher than it was for adults (206 child and youth victims compared to 39 adult victims per 100,000). For physical assault the rate was 563 child and youth victims per 100,000.⁹
- ◆ In 2005, girls under the age of 18 experienced rates of sexual assault almost four times higher than did their male counterparts. Specifically, girls and young women were sexually assaulted at a rate of 320 per 100,000 and boys and young men were sexually assaulted at a rate of 86 per 100,000.⁹
- ◆ In 2003, young women were more likely than young men to be victims of sexual assault. The highest number of sexual assaults (2,917) against girls was in the age group of 14 to 17. The likelihood of physical assault was higher for boys, with the highest number of physical assaults (9,247) in the age group of 14 to 17.² (See Figures 2 and 3.)

Figure 1: Substantiated cases of child maltreatment, 2003, by primary type of maltreatment.¹⁴

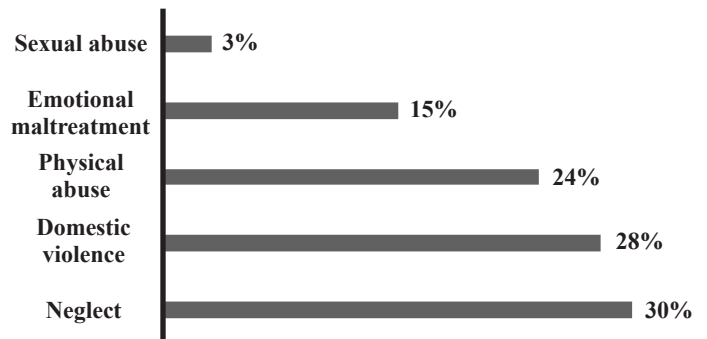


Figure 2: Child victims of sexual assault, by age and gender, 2003.²

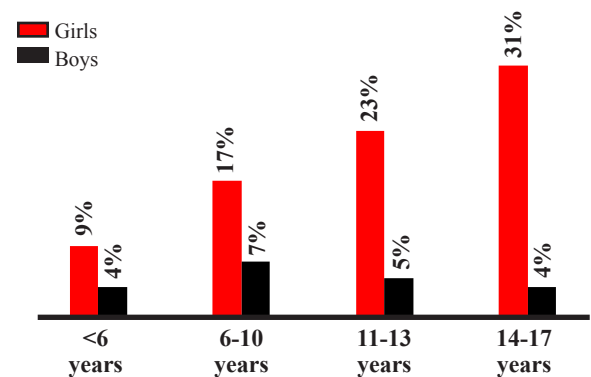
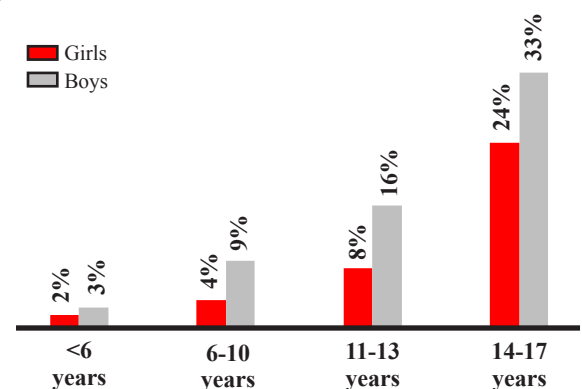


Figure 3: Child victims of physical assault, by age and gender, 2003.²



Violence in many ways - continued...

- ◆ Rates of physical assault and sexual assault perpetrated by a family member are higher for girls than for boys. In 2005, girls were victims of family violence by a parent at a rate of 139 per 100,000, whereas boys were victims of family violence by a parent at a rate of 99 per 100,000.⁹ (See Figure 4.)

Bullying and School Violence:

- ◆ In 2006, 19% of girls and 22% of boys in grade 6, and 24% of girls and 35% of boys in grade 10, reported bullying others at least once or twice in the past couple of months, whereas 33% of girls and 32% of boys in grade 6, and 20% of girls and 18% of boys in grade 10, reported being victimized at least once or twice in the past couple of months. Girls' likelihood of being bullied decreased with age, while girls' likelihood of bullying others peaked at grade 9.⁵
- ◆ Between 15% and 23% of girls in grades 6 through 10 reported both bullying others and being victims of bullying, with the likelihood of being both a bully and a victim decreasing with age.⁵
- ◆ In a 2001/2002 study of young people in 35 regions and countries, Canadian girls ranked near the top in prevalence of bullying and of being bullied at school, with girls age 13 ranking 8th in having bullied others at least once in the previous couple of months and 11th in having been bullied at least once in the previous couple of months.⁶

Cyber-Bullying:

- ◆ In 2007, between 17% and 24% of girls in grades 6-10 reported being victims of electronic bullying. Girls in all grades were more likely to report electronic bullying than were their male peers.⁵
- ◆ In a study of 5,200 children in grades 7 to 11, 34% reported that they had been bullied within the current school year and 12% reported that they had been sexually harassed. Among those students who reported being bullied, 27% said they had been bullied online; among those students who reported being sexually harassed, 70% said that they had been sexually harassed online.⁷

Risk Behaviors:

- ◆ A large study in one Canadian city found that adolescents who admitted to bullying their peers were more likely to engage in both sexual harassment and dating violence than those who did not admit to bullying. Among girls in high school, rates of opposite-sex sexual harassment and of physical dating aggression were high even among girls who did not admit to otherwise bullying their peers (37% and 12% respectively) but higher yet among girls who admitted to bullying their peers (66% and 23% respectively).¹⁰ (See Figure 5.)

Figure 4: Rate of family violence against children under age 18, by relationship of abuser to victim and by gender, 2005.⁹

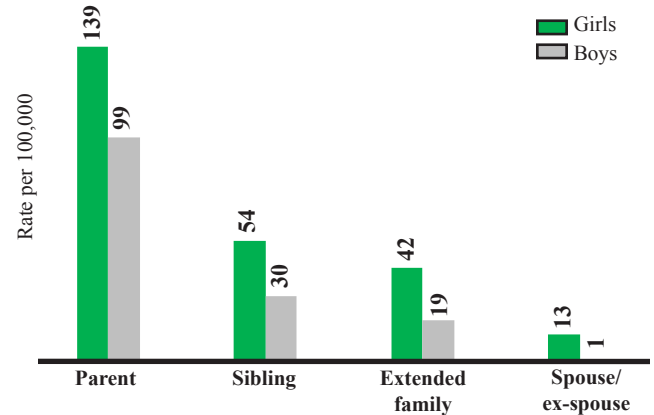
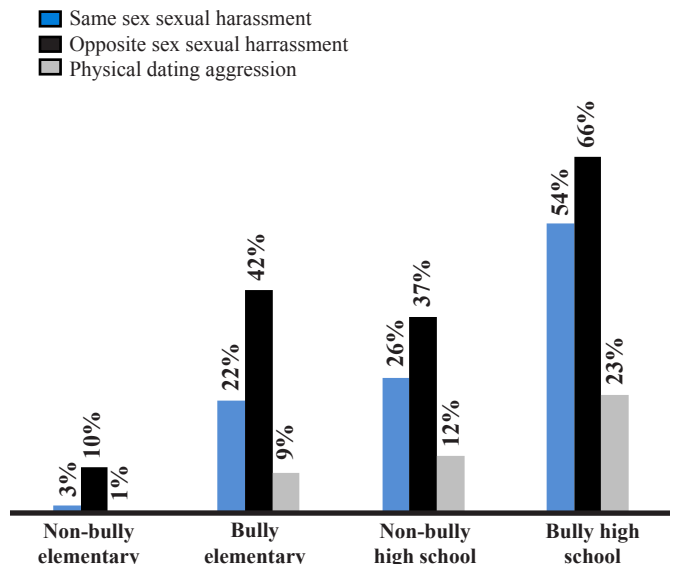


Figure 5: Association between bullying and other forms of aggression for girls in elementary (grades 6-8) and high school (grades 9-12).¹⁰



Risk Behaviors - continued

- ◆ In a study of 3,760 Ontario women and girls, it was found that adolescents who experienced sexual abuse, physical abuse, or both as children were two to four times more likely than those who were not abused to report running away from home before age 16.¹

Girls' exposure to violence often leads to involvement with the youth justice system.

- ◆ In 2004-2005, there were about 31,700 young persons admitted to correctional services. Of those, 15,900 admissions were to custody and 15,800 admissions were to community supervision, with the majority (81%) of community supervision admissions being probation. Girls and young women accounted for 21% of all young persons admitted to remand and 16% of all sentenced custody admissions.³
- ◆ In 2006, the national crime rate for young people age 12 to 17 increased 3%, the first increase since the introduction of the Youth Criminal Justice Act in 2003. However, the rate of youths charged by police dropped 1% and the rate of youths cleared by means other than a formal charge rose 6%.¹²
- ◆ In 2006 girls and young women age 12 to 17 accounted for 21% of all youth court cases in Canada. Girls and young women age 12-17 were charged with violent crimes and property crimes at a rate of 416 and 479 per 100,000 respectively.¹¹
- ◆ In 2005, 58% of crimes for which girls and young women were accused were violations against property, 28% were violations against the person, 11% were violations against the administration of justice, and 4% were other criminal code violations.[†] Girls and young women were most likely to be accused of theft other than of a motor vehicle and of common assault (38% and 15% of all accusations respectively).¹² In 2003/2004, girls and young women were most likely to be convicted of common assault and of theft (25% and 19% of all convictions respectively).⁸ (See also Figures 6 and 7.)

Figure 6: Most common court cases with convictions for young women, 2003/2004.⁸

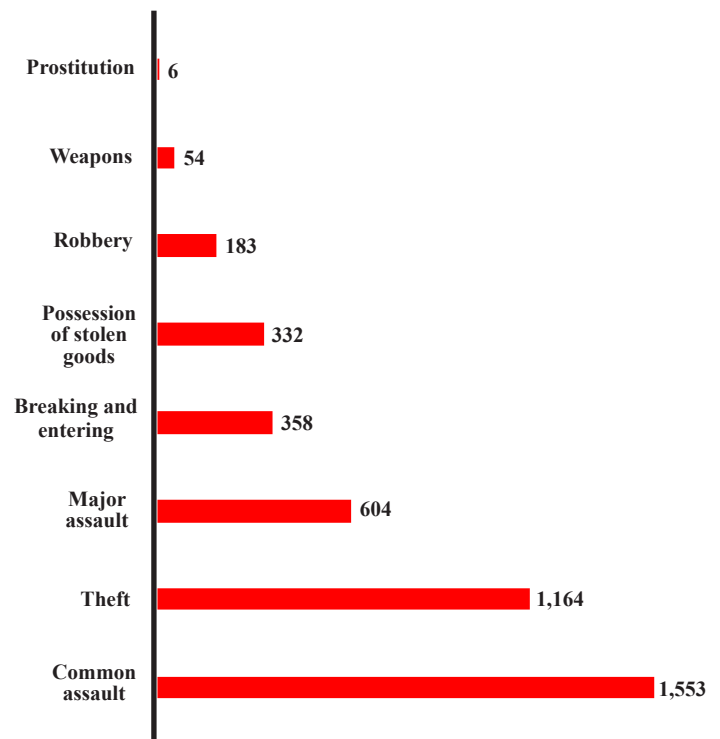


Figure 7: Convicted court cases for young people, percentages by gender, 2003-2004.⁸

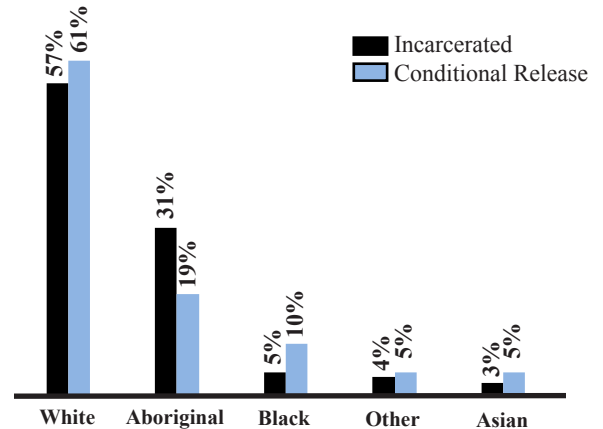


[†]Other criminal code violations include weapons, prostitution, disturbing the peace, counterfeiting currency, threatening/harassing phone calls, and residual criminal code.

Women of visible minority background, and women with psychiatric diagnoses, are overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

- ◆ In 2004-2005, Aboriginal young women represented 35% of all young women admitted to secure custody.³ Aboriginal girls and young women (ages 0 to 19) represent about 6% of the Canadian female population.¹³
- ◆ In 2006, Aboriginal offenders represented 17% of the federal offender population,¹¹ but only 4% of the Canadian adult population.¹³
- ◆ In Canada in 2006, among women in the federal offender population who were incarcerated, 57% were White, 31% were Aboriginal, 5% were Black, and 3% were Asian. White women (61%) also made up the highest percentage of federal women offenders on conditional release.⁴ (See Figure 8.)
- ◆ Among the female offenders in Canada in 2006, 29% had been previously hospitalized for psychiatric reasons.¹¹ (CCRSO, 2007)

Figure 8: Federal women offenders, by ethnicity and status, 2006.⁴



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For information on girls and other issues, see these **Girls Incorporated®** Fact Sheets:

- ◆ **Girls and Violence in the United States**
- ◆ **Girls and Juvenile Justice**
- ◆ **Girls and Their Bodies**
- ◆ **Girls and Careers**

Girls Inc. Project BOLD® strengthens girls' abilities to lead safer lives by developing strategies for self-defense, seeking out caring adults to help with personal violence, and advocating on violence issues.

Girls Inc. Media Literacy® encourages girls to think critically about media messages and fosters their awareness of the power of the media and its effect on girls.

Girls Inc. is a nonprofit organization in the United States and Canada that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and boldSM. With local roots dating to 1864 and national status in the U.S. since 1945, Girls Inc. has responded to the changing needs of girls and their communities through research-based programs and advocacy that empower girls to reach their full potential and to understand, value, and assert their rights.

Girls Inc. programs focus on science, math, and technology, health and sexuality, economic and financial literacy, sports skills, leadership and advocacy, and media literacy for girls ages 6 to 18 throughout the United States and in Canada. While our goal is to reach all girls, we recognize that girls in at-risk communities have an even greater need for our programs. Of those we serve, 70% are girls of color and 65% come from families earning \$25,000 or less; 48% are from single-parent households, most of which are headed by women.

Girls Inc. in 2007 reached over 900,000 girls through Girls Inc. affiliates, our website, and educational products. Guided by our vision of empowered girls and an equitable society, Girls Inc. is committed to reaching millions more girls through its programs and public education efforts.

The National Resource Center (NRC) is the organization's research, program development, national services, and training site. Research and evaluation conducted by the NRC provide the foundation for Girls Inc. programs. The NRC also responds to requests for information on girls' issues and distributes Girls Inc. publications.

Girls Inc. informs policy makers about girls' needs locally and nationally. The organization educates the media about critical issues facing girls. In addition, the organization teaches girls how to advocate for themselves and their communities, using their voices to promote positive change.

Girls Inc. leadership focuses on developing innovative ways to leverage our most valuable asset – acknowledged expertise as the nation's premiere program provider and advocate for girls. Our leaders include Bridgette P. Heller, Chair of the National Board; Joyce M. Roché, President and CEO; and Donna Brace Ogilvie, Distinguished Chair.

Girls Inc. Headquarters

120 Wall Street
New York, NY 10005-3902
(212) 509-2000 • Fax: (212) 509-8708
<http://www.girlsinc.org>

National Resource Center

441 West Michigan Street
Indianapolis, IN 46202-3233
(317) 634-7546 • Fax: (317) 634-3024

Washington Office

1001 Connecticut Avenue
Suite 740
Washington, DC 20036-5514
(202) 463-1881 • Fax: (202) 463-8994

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