

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



The *Beijing Platform for Action* (PfA) identifies “violence against women” as a critical area of concern. The PfA contains strategies and actions to: take integrated steps to prevent and eliminate violence; study the impact of violence, effectiveness of preventative measures, and; eliminate trafficking in women and assisting victims of violence due to prostitution.ⁱ

PATTERNS AND TRENDS*

- Between 1993 and 2002, women were four times more likely than men to be killed by their spouse. In 2002, there were 67 women killed by their spouses compared to 16 men.
- Women accounted for 85% of all police-reported victims of spousal violence in 2002, women aged 25-34 accounted for the majority; there were 23,558 cases reported by women and 4,105 reported by men.
- In 2000, 75% of criminal harassment incidents reported to police were directed at female victims.
- Some women, including Aboriginal women and women who are immigrants, refugees or members of a racial minority, experience disadvantages that make them more vulnerable to racialized and sexualized violence.
- The spousal homicide rate for Aboriginal women is more than eight times the rate for non-Aboriginal women and Aboriginal women are three times more likely to report having been assaulted by a current or former spouse;
- Approximately 448 shelters for abused women reported temporary accommodation for 96,359 women and children, an increase of 6% from 1998 to 2000;
- Children and youth under 18 years of age accounted for 61% of victims of sexual offences reported to police in 2002, approximately 85% were girls;
- A 1995 study estimated the total annual measurable economic costs of violence against women relating to health and well-being alone amounted to \$1.5 billion. When criminal justice,

employment and other costs are included estimates were much higher.

- Trafficking in humans is the world’s fastest growing international crime. The majority of those trafficked are women and girls/ children who are vulnerable to being trafficked for sexual exploitation compared to men who are mostly trafficked for forced labour.

TOWARDS EQUALITY

Examples of federal measures include:

- The Family Violence Initiative is a horizontal collaboration among 12 departments, agencies and Crown Corporations. The Initiative also facilitates partnerships with the provinces, territories and non-government organizations (NGOs) and undertakes research, develops resources and promotes policies, programs and projects that contribute to the prevention of family violence.
- The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence is a national resource centre for Canadians seeking information about family violence prevention, protection and treatment. Accessibility to its services and many information resources is enhanced through a website and toll free telephone number.
- The Shelter Enhancement Initiative provides assistance for emergency and second stage housing for victims of family violence, including First Nations communities. In some cases, the assistance is provided in partnership with a provincial or territorial government.
- The National Crime Prevention Strategy is the Government of Canada’s action plan for

reducing crime by addressing the root causes in order to build stronger, healthier communities. It provides communities with tools, knowledge and supports they need to deal with the causes of crime; its focus areas are children, youth, women and Aboriginal people.

- The offence of criminal harassment or “stalking” was added to the *Criminal Code* in 1993 mainly as a response to violence against women.
- Statistics Canada provides current data and works to continuously improve the availability of national level data on the nature and extent of family violence in Canada. The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth documents the effect on children who witness violence.
- Six provinces and territories have implemented civil domestic violence legislation that provides avenues of support for victims in addition to protections offered under the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

- Canada ratified the UN's *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* in 2002 as well as of its two supplementary protocols, the *Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air* and the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*.

ⁱ In the PFA, the term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life

* The source for data is Statistics Canada unless otherwise mentioned. For further information, also please note that *Women in Canada 2005: a gender-based statistical report* is being developed by Statistics Canada for publication in the fall of 2005.

RECENT INITIATIVES

- In 2002, Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers responsible for the Status of Women (FPTSW), in collaboration with Statistics Canada, released a report “*Assessing Violence Against Women: A Statistical Profile*.” Some of the above information is from this profile.
- At the 2003 and 2004 meetings, the FPTSW Ministers established issues of concern to Aboriginal women as a priority for their work.
- Trafficking in persons is criminalized in Canada under various *Criminal Code of Canada* offences and the new human trafficking offence in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA), which came into force in June 2002. The trafficking offence carries a maximum penalty of a fine up to \$1 million and/or up to a life imprisonment term.
- Canada's active work at the United Nations (UN) contributed to the establishment in 1994 of the mandate of the *UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences* to collect information, recommend measures to eliminate such violence and remedy its consequences.