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CANADIAN URBAN VICTIMIZATION SURVEY

Female Victims of Crime

Bulletin

4

FEMALE VICTIMS OF CRIME

Our understanding of crime and the impact of crime on victims has been greatly enhanced by the advent of criminal victimization surveys. These surveys provide us with a more comprehensive picture of the extent and nature of criminal victimization than is possible when we rely solely upon police records of criminal events. Most important, these surveys offer us a view of the experience and impact of crime from the perspective of victims.

The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (CUVS) was carried out by the Ministry of the Solicitor General, with the assistance of Statistics Canada, early in 1982 (see Appendix 1 for a discussion of the survey). Many of the major findings of this survey have

already been made available to the public through the report of the Federal-Provincial Task Force on Justice for Victims of Crime (1983), through a number of reports prepared for police and for federal government departments, and most visibly, through a series of victimization survey Bulletins. This, the fourth Bulletin in the series, focuses on a topic of special interest and concern — the criminal victimization of women.

The activities of various women's groups, particularly those which provide services to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, have contributed a great deal to our knowledge of the susceptibility of women to the most heinous and recurrent forms

of victimization and to the impact of victimization, both directly and in the victims' interactions with the criminal justice system.

This Bulletin contributes statistical data to further our understanding of what front-line workers have learned from experience: that women are vulnerable to some of the most profound forms of victimization and that female victims often have special needs. The more we learn about their experiences the better we can appreciate why so many women have found it difficult to obtain or even seek help in coping with the consequences of their victimization, and the better we can develop programs to meet their needs.

Fear of Crime

The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey (CUVS) shows that Canadian women experience a lower frequency of victimization than men but express greater fear for their personal safety. This finding has been consistent across nations and over time, regardless of the age of the respondents, their personal victimization experience or their lifestyle. In response to the CUVS question, "How safe do you feel walking alone in your own neighbourhood at night; very safe, relatively safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?", three times as many women responded by saying that they felt "somewhat unsafe" or "very unsafe".

Higher proportions of women, regardless of whether they had been victimized in the survey year, were fearful of walking alone in their own neighbourhoods at night. Female vic-

tims were even more likely to be fearful, particularly female victims of sexual assault (Table 1).

We now know from recent research on fear of crime that first-hand experience with victimization is only one dimension of fear. Repeated exposure to threatening situations, vulnerability to the aftermath and the consequences of violence, and the lack, real or perceived, of adequate avenues of redress all influence perception of risk, and therefore fear. Particularly relevant in understanding women's fear is an appreciation of the kinds of violence women are most vulnerable to, especially the experience and the impact of domestic and sexual violence. Some women live with the imminent threat of assault from someone in their own households, and many women live with the more general fear of sexual assault, concerns which rarely intrude into the lives of men.

The generalized fear that many women express cannot be explained by the frequency of sexual assault which, in its extreme form, is relatively rare. Sexual assault was the most serious offence covered by the survey, accounting for 1% of the total estimated incidents. The definition of sexual assault used in the survey includes a wide range of incidents: in 25% of the incidents the victim was raped; 25% involved attempted rape; and half were "molestings" (see Appendix 2 for complete definition of offences). Any form of sexual aggression may feed women's fears by sensitizing them to the possibility of violent attack. Victimization surveys obviously cannot address all the subtle reminders to women of their vulnerability. In the past, some incidents perceived by women to be serious and threatening were not treated as such by the criminal justice system. Recent legal and policy decisions indicate that public

Table 1**Percentage of Respondents Who Felt Unsafe¹ Walking Alone in their Neighbourhood After Dark by Type of Victimization and Sex of Respondent**

Seven Cities

Sex of Respondent	Total Respondents	Victimization Experience										
		During Survey Year										Prior to the Survey Year
		Non-Victims	Sexual Assault	Robbery	Assault	Break and Enter	Motor Vehicle Theft	Personal Theft	Household Theft	Vandalism	Personal Violent Crimes	
Females	56	54	72	70	66	65	65	58	60	59	66	
Males	18	17	**	29	21	23	20	17	17	17	22	

¹ Combines "very unsafe" and "somewhat unsafe" categories.

** The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

Table 2**Estimated Incidence of Personal and Household Offences**

Seven Cities

PERSONAL OFFENCES

Population aged 16 and older in seven cities = 4,975,900

Males = 2,357,000

Females = 2,618,900

Type of Incident	Estimated Incidents	Rates per 1,000 Population 16 and older		
		Total	Males	Females
All Personal Incidents	702,000	141	154	129
All Violent Incidents	352,200	70	90	53
Sexual Assaults	17,300	3.5	0.8	5.8
Robbery	49,200	10	13	7
Assault	285,700	57	79	39
Personal Theft	349,800	70	66	74

HOUSEHOLD OFFENCES

Total households in seven cities = 2,424,900

Type of Incident	Estimated Incidents	Rate per 1,000 Households
All Household Incidents	898,100	369
Break and Enter	227,300	94
Motor Vehicle Theft	40,600	17
Household Theft	417,200	172
Vandalism	213,000	88

perceptions and the response of the criminal justice system are changing. Incidents previously regarded as unavoidable and personal are increasingly coming to be viewed as intolerable and criminal, as public rather than private issues. As Canadians — men and women — become less willing to condone the many, everyday acts of aggression directed against women, we

can expect common definitions of domestic and sexual violence, and of the seriousness of these offences, to change as well. Victimization surveys tap these kinds of perceptions.

The survey data show that large numbers of women feel unsafe walking alone at night and that women attend evening activities outside the home less

frequently than men. While avoidance of high risk situations may well be an important element of victimization prevention, there are obvious limits and costs to a strategy of withdrawal. First, the occurrence of sexual assault is not restricted to outside locations. Second, withdrawing from social activities results in a reduction of social support systems that, when in place, may help to prevent crime, reduce fear and provide assistance in the event of a victimization. Rather than enhancing feelings of security, curtailing social activities can have the reverse effect and actually compound fear. A good deal of recent research has shown that fear for personal safety contributes to feelings of loss of control over the environment which in turn exacerbates fear. Even moderate withdrawal in order to prevent violent victimization can diminish an individual's sense of personal autonomy and have a negative impact on the overall quality of life.

Sexual Assault

The survey uncovered an estimated 17,300 sexual assault incidents in the seven cities, about 90% (15,600) involving female victims (see Appendix 3 for issues of measurement). A total of 15,100 women were victimized, about 6% more than once in the survey year. Women were seven times as likely as men to experience a sexual attack (Table 2), but like women, male victims are faced with serious difficulties in coping with the aftermath of the assault.

Young women are at greatest risk of being sexually assaulted; sixty-eight percent of the female victims of sexual assault were under 25 years of age (respondents were all 16 or older). Risk

was also highest for unmarried women, and for those who described themselves as "students" or "looking for work". Lifestyle as measured by evenings out is related to the risk of being the victim of a violent crime, and sexual assault is no exception. The reported incidence of sexual assault was highest for those who attended the greatest number of evening activities outside the home. Marriage, family responsibilities and full time employment all influence the amount of available leisure time and how much of that time is likely to be spent outside the home and therefore at greater risk of being victimized by strangers.

Forty-one percent of all sexual assaults, however, involved victims and assailants known to one another. This includes offenders known casually or by sight, neighbours or friends (34%), and a small proportion who were related to the victim (7%).

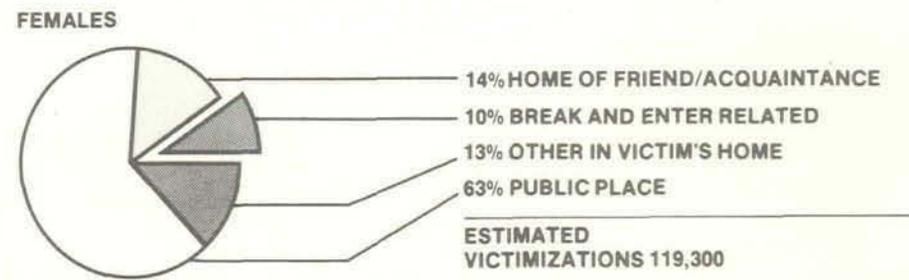
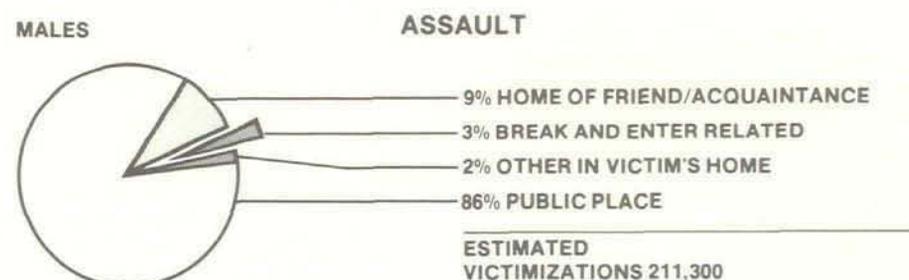
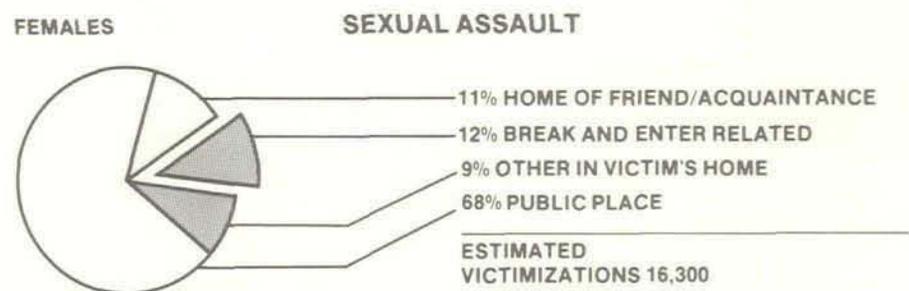
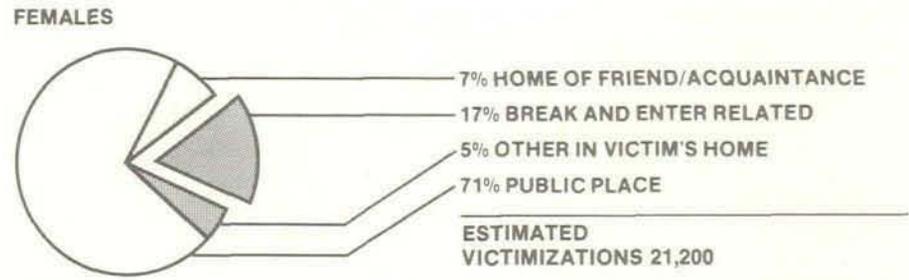
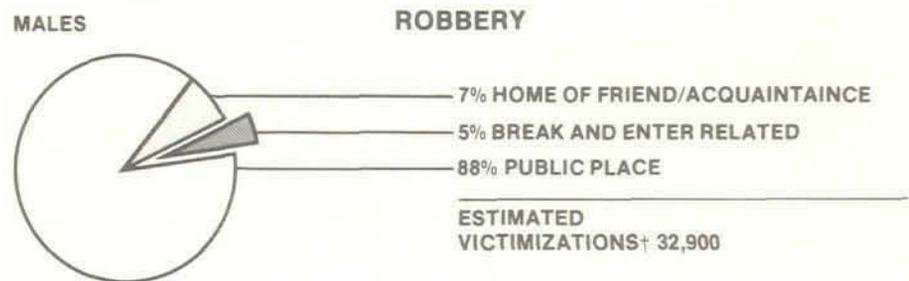
Overall, 21% of the sexual assault incidents occurred inside the victim's own residence, and an additional 11% took place either in the home of a friend or acquaintance or in the vicinity of the victim's own home. The remaining 68% took place outside or in other public locations. The victim's home was the location of half of the actual rapes, whereas attempts and molesting occurred most often in outside places (36%; 50%).

The fact that sexual assault can be a component of break and enter no doubt contributes to women's generalized fear and feelings of vulnerability. Over half of the sexual assaults which occurred in the victim's home involved illegal entry. In the rest of the cases, acquaintances or strangers (such as repairmen) were allowed into the home (Figure 1). Fear will be particularly great once the victim no longer believes that her home provides safety.

Agencies which offer support to the victims of sexual assault have long maintained that the police become aware of only a fraction of all sexual assaults that occur, and that the reason many women refuse involvement with the legal system is the strong belief that such involvement will only add to their trauma. The responses to the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey support these concerns. Fully 62% of female sexual assault victims did not report their victimization to the police. An assault of a sexual nature poses special problems for both the victim and the person to whom she turns for assist-

FIGURE 1

PLACE OF OCCURRENCE OF VIOLENT OFFENCES BY SEX OF VICTIM



† This number is higher than the number of incidents because more than one victim may be involved in a single incident.

ance, a fact now recognized by police and others working in the criminal justice field. In the survey year, 44% of sexual assault victims who did not report their victimization to the police were "concerned about the attitudes of the police or courts toward this type of incident"; one-third said that "the incident was a personal matter and of no concern to the police". As police officers and other criminal justice agents are increasingly being given the training necessary to assist sexual assault victims with care and sensitivity, some reduction in these concerns can be expected.

Half of the sexual assault victims who did not report the incident to the police said that "the police couldn't do anything about it", and one-third felt sufficiently threatened by the offender that "fear of revenge" was a primary consideration in deciding not to report. Sexual assaults by strangers were more likely to be reported (45%) than incidents involving acquaintances (36%) or relatives (22%), perhaps due to a fear of revenge by someone known to the victim and a wish on the part of the victim to keep the incident private.

Domestic Violence

Of particular concern is the risk for women of being assaulted in their own homes and by someone known to them. A higher proportion of assaults against women than against men occurred in the victim's residence (23% vs 5%) or in the vicinity of her home or in someone else's home (14% vs 9%). Women were also much more likely to be assaulted by relatives (12% vs 2%) or acquaintances (36% vs 25%). Our data show that women were victims in 77% of family-related assaults: 90% of assaults between spouses; 80% of assaults between ex-spouses; and 55% of assaults involving other relatives. The majority of assaults against both men (98%) and women (89%) involved male offenders.

Most of the assaults against male victims which occurred in their own homes can be traced to incidents in which offenders had gained illegal entry through breaking and entering and were confronted by the victim. Ten percent of the assaults against women occurred in this context (Figure 1).

Our data show that some women were subjected to repeated violence. A total of 97,700 women were victims of assault in the survey year, 16% (15,400) more than once, for a total of 119,300 assault victimizations. The recurrent nature of domestic violence in particular is confirmed by reports of "series" assaults. When respondents reported that the same type of incident had occurred five times or more within the reference period, each series of similar incidents was counted as one in the estimations given². Six percent of all assaults against women represent a series of five or more like incidents. Seventy percent of the estimated 6,100 series assaults experienced by women occurred in the women's homes and 36% involved a spouse or former spouse.

Women who were separated from their spouses at the time of the interview showed a higher overall risk of being assaulted than divorced, single, married or widowed women, and the highest incidence of assaults by marital partners (Table 3). About 54% of all

² Special procedures were necessary to record a series of events so similar that the victim was unable to distinguish the details of each. Respondents were asked to report on the most recent incident in the series and these responses were taken as representative of the series of incidents.

assaults against separated women were committed by former marital partners and these assaults occurred before or during a period of separation. Women who have separated from a violent partner may be more likely to define their abuse as criminal assault and to report it to an interviewer than women who are remaining in a violent marriage.

For many reasons — changing perceptions of what constitutes assault, and the economic, physical and sometimes emotional dependency of the woman on the man she lives with — domestic violence remains very much hidden from public view and from sources of support for victims. The police became aware of such incidents in about 45% of assaults by a spouse and 51% of assaults by a former spouse. Furthermore, if victims of domestic violence do not themselves report incidents to the police, other witnesses are not likely to do so. Reporting of the incident by a witness other than the victim ranged from 9% in assaults involving marital partners to 16% in incidents involving acquaintances and 21% in assaults by strangers (Table 4).

Some women may have received assistance to end the violence or terminate the relationship without involving

Table 3

Risk of being assaulted and relationship to offender by marital status of female victims

Seven Cities

Marital status of victims	Rates per 1,000 Population	Percentage of Victimization Attributed to Marital Partner			Non-spousal Rates/1,000 Population	Spousal Rates/1,000 Population
		Spouse	Ex-spouse	Any partner		
Single	70	1 ⁽¹⁾	0.3	1	69	1
Married/ Common Law	21	8	1	9	19	2
Widowed	6	0	0	0	6	0
Separated	102	34	20	54	47	55
Divorced	90	5	15	20	72	18
All Female Victims	39	6	4	10	35	4
Estimated Victimization	119,300	6,400 ⁽²⁾	3,800 ⁽²⁾	10,200 ⁽²⁾		

¹ Respondents could give more than one reason for not reporting.

⁽¹⁾ Marital status was given at the time of the interview and may have changed since the time of the incident.
⁽²⁾ In approximately 7% of the cases relationship between the victim and the offender was unknown.

Table 4**Violent offences against females that come to the attention of the police by relationship to the offender**

Seven Cities

Type of offence and relationship to offender	Percent reported		
	Total ⁽¹⁾	By victim	By other witness
Sexual assault	39	26	14
Stranger	45	26	18*
Acquaintance	36*	**	**
Relative	**	**	**
Robbery	62	44	18
Stranger	64	46	18
Acquaintance	50	29*	**
Relative	78*	71*	**
Assault	45	27	18
Stranger	44	22	21
Acquaintance	47	31	16
Relative — spouse	45	36	9*
— ex-spouse	51	38	14*
— other relative	**	**	**

⁽¹⁾ Estimates may not add to totals given due to rounding.

* The actual count was low (11 to 20), therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this proportion.

** The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

the police in the process. Fear of retaliation and the perceived social stigma of being the victim of inter-spousal violence keeps many women afraid to seek assistance from the police or anyone else. Half of all the women who did not report assaults by husbands gave as a reason "fear of revenge by the offender", and 59% explained that they viewed the incident as a "personal matter and of no concern to the police". One-third of the female victims of domestic violence interviewed for this survey did not report the incident because they "did not want to get the offender into trouble with the police". Finally, 58% of victims did not report the abuse to the police because they felt certain that "the police couldn't do anything about it".

Robbery

An incident was classified as a robbery when property was taken or attempted to be taken and there was confrontation between the victim and the offender. Overall, the risk for men of being robbed was double the risk for women. Rates declined with age for both sexes but more rapidly for men, so

that by age 60, women were equally likely to be robbery victims. The extreme vulnerability of older women to crimes such as purse snatching makes them very attractive targets for robbery.

At greatest risk are women who described their main activity as "student" (13 per 1,000), "working" (8 per 1,000) or "looking for work" (7 per 1,000), and, more generally, those who attended twenty or more evening activities outside the home each month (12 per 1,000). Homemakers and retired women (4 per 1,000) and those who attended fewer than twenty evening activities per month (5 per 1,000) experienced the lowest incidence of robbery. Seventy-one percent of the robberies occurred in public places, 22% took place in the victim's residence, and 7% in someone else's residence. The pattern was the same for men with a smaller proportion occurring in the victim's residence (5%) and a larger proportion occurring in public places (88%). An estimated 5,300 robberies³ occurred after offend-

³ See Appendix 2 for a definition of the difference between a robbery and a break and enter.

ers had gained illegal entry into homes; in these incidents, two-thirds of the victims were women.

Strangers were responsible for most of the robberies against both male (85%) and female victims (78%). Women were somewhat more likely than men to have been robbed by acquaintances (17% vs 14%) and relatives (5%). The actual number of men robbed by relatives was too low to make statistically reliable estimates.

Robberies committed against female victims were more likely to come to the attention of police (53%) than those with male victims (36%). When female victims were asked why they did not report robbery incidents to the police, they indicated that: "the incident was too minor" (57%), "the police couldn't do anything about it" (55%), or "nothing was taken" (49%).

The Consequences of Victimization

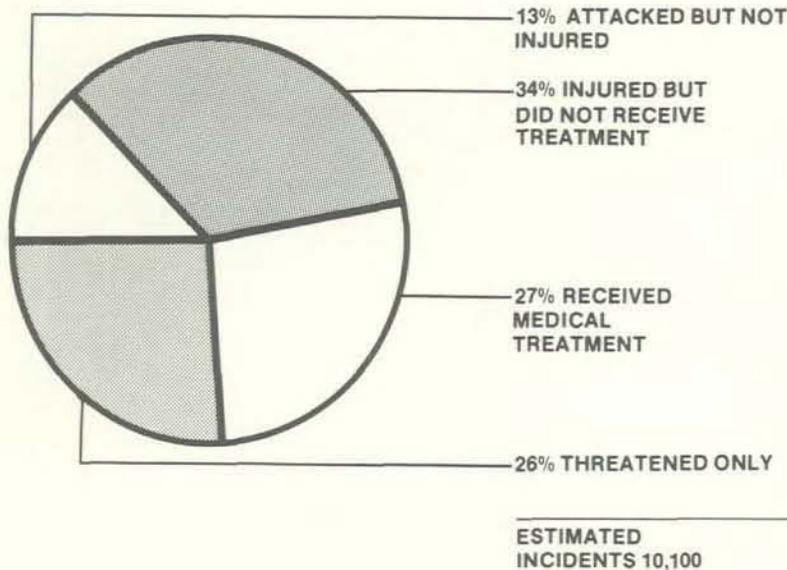
Over the past several years increasing attention has been paid to the impact of criminal victimization in physical, emotional and financial terms. Various groups and services have been established to meet the needs of crime victims for emotional and practical support and are working to encourage improvements in the response of the justice system toward victims of crime. Chief among them are groups representing the concerns of female victims of violence.

The incidence of physical injury was high among female victims: victims of sexual assault were injured in 61% of the cases, 20% badly enough to require medical attention. Female victims of non-sexual assault were threatened in 50% of the incidents and injured in 28%. In 9% of assault incidents the injury necessitated medical treatment. Female robbery victims were attacked in 63% of the incidents and injured in 35%.

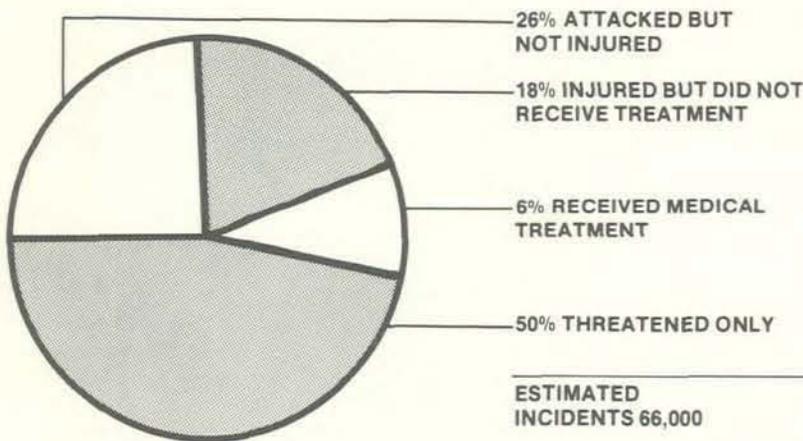
Women were more likely to be injured in assaults involving family members, especially if they were victims of "series assaults". Sixty-one percent of women assaulted by their spouses and 24% of women assaulted by other men were injured in the attack (Figure 2). It may be that they were more likely to report domestic incidents to interviewers when the incidents resulted in injury.

FIGURE 2
INJURY SUSTAINED BY FEMALE ASSAULT VICTIMS

ASSAULTS BY SPOUSE OR EX-SPOUSE



ASSAULTS BY OTHER† MALES



† No marital relationship existed between victim and offender.

Fifty-two percent of women who were injured in a violent incident lost time away from their normal daily activities because of the injury. Fifteen percent were incapacitated for up to 5 days, 19% for 6 to 20 days, and 18% for three weeks or more.

Far more difficult to measure than physical injury is the emotional trauma

of violent victimization. Emotional distress can persist long after the actual experience, disrupting the victim's normal functioning, her trust in others, and her sense of personal security. One measure of the persistence of emotional trauma over time is the finding that 66% of women who had experienced some type of violent victimization at any point in their lives prior

to the survey year felt unsafe walking in their own neighbourhoods after dark (Table 1).

Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate whether they thought that emotional or psychological counselling should be made available for the type of victimization they suffered. Female victims in all crime categories were more likely than male victims to say that counselling should be available, especially women who had been the victims of sexual assault, robbery or assault during the survey year (Table 5). The extreme trauma of violent victimization by an intimate has been well documented and is reaffirmed by the findings of this survey. Eighty-one percent of female victims of spousal assault believed that counselling should be available.

Women socially disadvantaged by low household income or low education were at greatest risk of becoming victims of violent crime. The impact of violent victimization is no doubt more severe for women who have limited financial or personal resources to deal with the consequences of an attack. Women with annual household incomes of less than \$15,000 experienced the highest rates of sexual assault, robbery and assault. Further, 30% of female victims of violence had less than high school education and an additional 45% had finished high school but had not completed a post secondary school program.

Self-Protection

The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey questioned respondents about what action they took at the time of the incident to defend or protect themselves, and what measures they took as a result of the incident to prevent a recurrence of the crime.

In the case of both sexual assault and robbery, over half of the victims fought with the offender or otherwise actively defended themselves against the attack. Overall, assault victims were more likely to defend themselves verbally, but when actually attacked, they were equally likely to defend themselves physically (36%), to scream for help or run away (30%), or to try to reason with the offender (34%)⁴.

⁴ Assault may range from face-to-face verbal threats to an attack with extensive injuries. Fifty percent of female assault victims were threatened by the offender and 50% were attacked.

Table 5

Percentage of victims who felt that emotional or psychological counselling should be available by type of victimization and sex of victim

Seven Cities

Sex of Victims	Type of victimization							
	Sexual assault	Robbery	Assault	Break and enter	Motor vehicle theft	Personal theft	Household theft	Vandalism
Females	89	63	59	33	21	21	13	15
Males	71	52	38	26	19	14	13	12

Twenty-three percent of sexual assault victims who provided information on the action they took to defend themselves said they tried to talk their way out the situation, 23% screamed for help or ran away, and the largest proportion (54%) resisted actively by fighting or using a weapon. Women who were able to defend themselves by screaming for help, or running away from the attacker were least likely to be injured in the attack (42% injured). Sixty percent of those who tried reasoning with their attackers, and 60% of those who resisted actively by fighting or using weapon were injured. Every sexual assault incident is unique and so many factors are unknown (physical size of victims and offenders, verbal or physical threats, etc.) that no single course of action can be recommended unqualifiedly.

Female robbery victims were more likely to be injured in the incident if they screamed or ran away (35%) or fought with the offender (33%) than if they cooperated or tried to reason with him (22%). Likewise, female victims of assault who defended themselves

physically against the attacker were more likely to be injured (36%) than those who gave a verbal defence (24%). Women who screamed for help or ran away were least likely to be injured in assault (21%).

Victims are also asked about their attempts to "protect themselves or their families from crime" subsequent to their victimization experience. High proportions of sexual assault victims in particular took some measures to protect themselves (66% of sexual assault victims, 57% of robbery victims and 38% of assault victims), and to have "changed their activity pattern" in order to avoid a recurrence of the experience (39% of sexual assault victims, 21% of robbery victims and 15% of assault victims).

Taking positive steps to prevent a recurrence of violent crime is certainly understandable, but the extent to which behavioural changes restrict freedom of movement merits special attention and concern. The survey findings suggest that substantial numbers of women, because of their fear,

feel compelled to take the kind of precautionary or evasive actions which can appreciably diminish the overall quality of their lives.

Perceptions of the Police

Police have been accused in the past of inflicting a "second victimization" on certain victims who come to them for assistance. The Canadian Urban Victimization Survey measured various aspects of police behaviour from the perspective of victims. Most Canadians, including crime victims, were very positive about the police; however, female victims of sexual assault who sought the assistance of police were more critical of police case-handling than any other victims. They were more likely than others to give police a "poor" rating on keeping them informed on the progress of their case, on the courtesy they displayed toward the victim, and on their overall performance (Table 6). Over the last few years, the police and other components of the criminal justice system have developed policies, practices and training to respond to

Table 6

Proportion of victims who perceived police response to be "poor" by sex of victim

Seven Cities

Type of offence	Aspects of police behaviour							
	Promptness		Courtesy		Keeping victim informed		Overall case handling	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Sexual Assault	22*	**	24*	**	46	**	38	**
Robbery	22	15	19	8*	38	38	28	23
Assault	19	11	12	13	26	27	25	21

* The actual count was low (11 to 20), therefore caution should be exercised when interpreting this proportion.

** The actual count was too low to make statistically reliable population estimates.

these needs. Further research will assess what remains to be done.

Theft of Personal Property

Theft of household property and theft of personal property were the two most common types of victimization uncovered by this survey, and both rank near the bottom of the scale in terms of relative seriousness (see Appendix 2).

Women were more likely to experience theft of personal property (74 thefts per 1,000 females) than men (66 per 1,000 males), and as with violent offences, risk of having personal property stolen more than doubled as average number of evening activities outside the home increased. For women the increase was from 38 thefts per 1,000 population among those who averaged nine or fewer evening activities outside the home per month, to 122 thefts per 1,000 among those who averaged twenty or more. The increased risk for men was from 29 to 92 incidents per 1,000 among those who averaged nine or fewer and twenty or more evening activities per month. Not only were women more susceptible than men to having their personal property stolen whatever their relative level of evening activity, the risk of victimization increased more for women as they spent increasing numbers of evenings outside the home. There were no major differences between men and women as to where they were when their personal property was stolen. One-third of the incidents occurred at work, one-quarter in commercial establishments, pubs or bars, one-quarter in public places, and the remainder occurred in the home of the victim or someone else.

Theft of personal property is reported to the police less often than any other crime covered by the survey. Overall, women reported only slightly more incidents (30%) than did male victims (28%). The main reasons given for failure to report or call the police were that the police "couldn't do anything about it", or the incident was considered to be "too minor"; however, 27% of the incidents were reported to another official (such as a security guard), perhaps because it was more convenient to do so, or because many thefts occurred where private security personnel were on duty.

Conclusions

The findings of the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey contribute to a growing awareness of the special needs of female victims of violent crime. These special needs result not only from the actual incidence of violence against women, but also from the vulnerability of women to some of the most serious forms of violence. Because of the stigma still to some degree attached to victims of sexual and domestic assault, and the social invisibility and dependency of many abused women, many female victims hesitate to seek redress through traditional sources. The growing sensitivity within criminal justice agencies toward female victims of sexual and domestic violence is an important first step toward meeting their needs. Most importantly, the survey data point to an urgent need to develop a multi-disciplinary approach and a wide range of strategies for assisting female victims of crime.

Appendix 1

About the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey

Early in 1982 the Ministry of the Solicitor General, with the assistance of Statistics Canada, conducted a victimization survey in seven major urban centres: Greater Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax-Dartmouth and St. John's. A random sample of 61,000 residents 16 years of age or older were asked about their perceptions of crime and the criminal justice system, their experience of certain crimes, and the impact which criminal victimization may have had upon them.

Because of the relatively low incidence in any one year of some types of crimes included in the survey, very large samples are required to ensure that enough cases are "caught" to be statistically representative of all actual cases in the community under study. Sample sizes ranged from 6,910 in one city to 9,563 in another, with more than 61,000 telephone interviews completed by Statistics Canada interviewers overall. Telephone interviews were used because the cost of interviewing in person for such a large survey was prohibitive. Careful pretests in Edmonton, Hamilton and Greater Vancouver had proven that reliable data could be obtained through telephone interviews.

To maximize reliability of recall, respondents were asked to report on only those incidents which had occurred between January 1 and December 31, 1981. On the basis of these interviews, statistical estimates were made for the general population 16 and over in the seven cities. These statistically derived estimates for the population are used throughout this bulletin.

Victimization surveys can provide information about most, but not all types of crimes that are of major concern to the general public. Crimes such as murder or kidnapping cannot be uncovered using survey techniques, and were therefore excluded. "Victimless" crimes and crimes committed against commercial establishments were also excluded from this survey.

The eight categories of crimes included in this survey are: sexual assault, robbery, assault, break and enter, motor vehicle theft, theft of household property, theft of personal property and vandalism.

Appendix 2

Definitions and Limitations

The eight categories of crimes included in this survey are: sexual assault, robbery, assault, breaking and entering, motor vehicle theft, theft of household property, theft of personal property and vandalism. These offences are ranked in descending order of seriousness.

1. Sexual assault includes rape, attempted rape, molesting or attempted molestation, and is considered the most serious crime.
2. Robbery occurs if something is taken and the offender has a weapon or there is a threat or an attack. The presence of a weapon is assumed to imply a threat. Attempted robberies are also included in this offence category.
3. Assault involves the presence of a weapon or an attack or threat. Assault incidents may range from face-to-face verbal threats to an attack with extensive injuries.
4. Break and enter occurs if a dwelling is entered by someone who has no right to be there. "No right to be there" differentiates, for example, between a workman who is in a dwelling with the permission of the owner and steals something, and someone illegally entering the dwelling to take property. The latter would be classified as a break and enter as are attempts to enter a dwelling if there is some evidence of force or knowledge of how the person tried to get in.
5. Motor vehicle theft involves the theft or attempted theft of a car, truck, van, motorcycle or other motor vehicle.
6. Theft or attempted theft of household property.
7. Theft or attempted theft of money or other personal property (not household property).
8. Vandalism occurs if property is damaged but not taken.

Incidents which involved the commission of several different criminal acts appear in the tables only once, according to the most serious component of the event. Thus for example, if sexual assault, theft of money and vandalism all occurred at the same time, the incident would be classified in these tables as sexual assault. An incident would be classified as vandalism (least serious on the hierarchy) only if no other crime which is higher on the seriousness scale occurred at the same time.

Appendix 3

Some Issues of Measurement

There is as yet no fully satisfactory way of measuring certain crimes which may be a source of embarrassment to the victim, or which victims may not define as crimes. Sexual assault and domestic violence are notoriously under-reported to police, but with a changing social climate, reporting rates may also change (see Bulletin No. 2 in this series "Reported and Unreported Crime").

The estimated numbers obtained from the Canadian Urban Victimization Survey are undoubtedly somewhat conservative. This survey was not designed specifically to measure sexual assault or domestic violence, but all respondents were asked a series of questions phrased in non-technical language about whether they had been the victim of an assault (sexual or non-sexual), robbery or theft, and were asked to describe any such incidents regardless of whether the incident had been reported to police, and regardless of the age, sex or relationship of the offender, to the victim. Such a methodology encourages victims to describe all incidents under study, but no methodology can ensure that all incidents will be disclosed to interviewers.

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