

FACT SHEET: Children and Sexual Abuse

Many kids are sexually victimized. The Badgley Report of the Committee on Sexual Offenses Against Children in Canada found that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys were sexually abused before the age of 18.¹ This is the only national study to estimate the prevalence of sexual abuse conducted in Canada to date.

Adults don't forget childhood sexual abuse. Canadian researchers found that that 53% of women and 31% of men indicated they were sexually abused when they were children.² The effects of child abuse last for years. In an analysis of 23 research studies, significant relationships were noted between child sexual abuse and these impacts suffered by the survivors: depression, low self-esteem, anxiety, personality disorders, suicidal behaviour, psychiatric illness and dissociative disorders.³

What is Sexual Abuse?

“Part V” of the Criminal Code of Canada (Department of Justice, 2010) has a number of sections related to child sexual abuse and assault.⁴ It defines sexual abuse as:

- *S.151: Sexual Interference (children under 16)*
- *S.152: Invitation to Sexual Touching (children under 16)*
- *S.153: Sexual Exploitation*
- *S. 153.1: Sexual Exploitation of a Person with a Disability (applies to children/adults)*
- *S. 155: Incest*
- *S.163.1: Child Pornography & Internet*
- *S. 170: Parent or Guardian Procuring Sexual Activity*
- *S. 172.1: Luring Children on the Internet*
- *S. 173. (2): Exposure of Genitals to a Person under 16 years of age*

Who Commits Sexual Abuse?

Most of the time children are sexual abused by someone they know and trust. In 2012, of the 14,000 police reported cases of child/youth sexual assaults:⁵

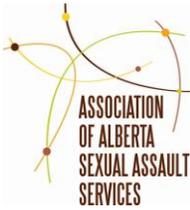
¹ Badgley, R. (1984). Report of the Committee on Sexual Offenses Against Children in Canada.

² Badgley, R. (1984). Report of the Committee on Sexual Offenses Against Children in Canada.

³ Jumper, S. A. (1995). A Meta-analysis of the Relationship of Child Sexual Abuse to Adult Psychological Adjustment. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 19, 715–728.

⁴ Criminal Code of Canada: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/C-46/>

⁵ Statistics Canada (2012). Police-reported sexual offences against children and youth in Canada. Statistics Canada. (Catalogue number 85-002-X). Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2014001/article/14008-eng.htm>.



- 12% of the accused were stranger – Older children/youth between the ages of 12 and 17 were more likely to be assaulted by a stranger than younger children (80% of stranger assaults were perpetrated against this older age group).
- 88% of the accused were known to the child/youth.
- Of those known, 38% were family members, 44% were acquaintances of the child/youth and 6% were intimate partners of the child/youth.

How common is Sexual Abuse?

Most reported sexual abuse involves kids. Sexual abuse is also the second highest police-reported violent crime committed against children and youth. In 2008, there were over 13,600 child and youth victims of sexual offences reported to police. Over half (59%) of all reported victims of sexual assault were children and youth under the age of 18. Despite the fact that both boys and girls are vulnerable to sexual violence, females had higher rates of reported sexual offences (82%).⁶

Kids very rarely lie about sexual abuse. 92-98% of sexual violence reports are investigated to be true.⁷ In the few recorded cases in which children appear to have made false allegations, it has usually been the result of manipulation by an adult. False denials of sexual abuse (saying it did not happen when it did) and recanting a disclosure (denying it happened after telling someone about being abused) are much more common than false reports.⁸

Children often do not tell others that they have been sexually abused for a variety of reasons including the offender's threats to hurt or kill someone the victim loves, as well as shame, embarrassment, wanting to protect the offender, feelings for the offender, fear of being held responsible or being punished, fear of being disbelieved, and fear of losing the offender who may be very important to the child or the child's family.⁹

First Nations families are heavily affected by history of abuse. The legacy of sexual abuse in residential schools in Canada has resulted in generations of First Nations children and families living with the trauma associated with childhood sexual abuse.¹⁰ There are currently no Canada-wide prevalence

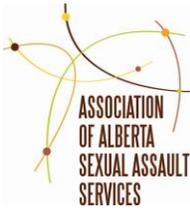
⁶ Statistics Canada (2008). Child and Youth Victims of Police-Reported Crimes. (Catalogue number 85F0033M). Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85f0033m/85f0033m2010023-eng.pdf>

⁷ The National Centre for the Prosecution of Violence Against Women (2009) http://www.ndaa.org/pdf/the_voice_vol_3_no_1_2009.pdf

⁸ Health Canada (1997). Child Sexual Abuse: Information from the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence. Public Health Agency of Canada website.

⁹ Brown, E.G. (Jr) (nd). Facts about sexual offenders. Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General: State of California. Retrieved December 2, 2009 from <http://www.meganslaw.ca.gov/facts.aspx>

¹⁰ Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres (2005). A Provincial Response to Sexual Violence Funding Plan. Calgary, Alberta.



studies on the amounts of child sexual abuse in Aboriginal community.¹¹ However, a recent literature review analyzed twenty Canadian studies on the rate of child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities from 1989 to 2007 and determined that before the age of eighteen, 25% to 50% of Aboriginal adults were sexually assaulted.¹² In Canada, up to 3 out of 4 Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have been sexually assaulted.¹³

Kids with disabilities are easy prey for abusers. A 1992 Canadian study by the Roeher Institute found that 40 to 70% of female children with developmental disabilities and 15 to 30% of male children with developmental disabilities experience sexual abuse.¹⁴

AASAS welcomes your suggestions and recommendations about other relevant Canadian research references that could be included on this website. Please e-mail us at mailbox@aaas.ca

¹¹ K LW Consulting. 2010. Preventing sexual victimization of children and youth: A review of the literature. (Calgary, AB: Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse).

¹² Collin-Vezina, J.; Dion, D.; Trocme, N. 2009. "Sexual abuse in Canadian Aboriginal Communities: A broad review of conflicting evidence." *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health* 7(1), 27-47.

¹³ A Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Aboriginal Women:
http://www.oaith.ca/assets/files/Publications/Strategic_Framework_Aboriginal_Women.pdf

¹⁴ The Roeher Institute. (1992). *No More Victims: Manual to Guide Counsellors in Addressing the Sexual Abuse of People with Mental Handicaps*. North York, Ontario.