



ONE IS TOO MANY: 10 YEARS OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDES IN CANADA

Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with
Vulnerable Populations

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REPORT PREPARED BY:

Myrna Dawson, Danielle Sutton, Peter Jaffe, Anna-Lee Straatman, and Julie Poon

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Myrna Dawson

Director, Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence
University of Guelph

mdawson@uoguelph.ca

Peter Jaffe

Academic Director, Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women & Children (CREVAWC)
Western University

pjaffe@uwo.ca

CDHPVP MANAGEMENT TEAM

Anna-Lee Straatman

Project Manager

Julie Poon

National Research Coordinator

For a full listing of CDHPVP Partnership Members and Organizations, please visit:

<http://cdhpi.ca/partnership-members>

<http://cdhpi.ca/partner-organizations>

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Canadian Domestic Homicide
Prevention Initiative



HIGHLIGHTS

This study documents the number of domestic homicides in Canada between 2010 and 2019 based on court and media reports. This research was conducted as part of a multi-year, SSHRC-funded project entitled *The Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations* (CDHPVP; 2015-2021). The project involves academic and community partners across Canada who are focused on promoting collaborative, multi-sectoral research to identify unique individual, community and societal level risk factors that may increase exposure to domestic violence and domestic homicide for specific populations.

This report prioritized four populations as a first step: (1) Indigenous populations; (2) immigrant and refugee populations; (3) rural, remote, and northern (RRN) populations; and (4) children killed in the context of domestic violence. Each of these populations experience factors that enhance their vulnerability to domestic violence and domestic homicide and exacerbate the negative mental and physical health consequences of this violence. These groups face significant challenges in finding services and safety. In short, they appear to be at greater risk of domestic homicide due to historical oppression and/or lack of access to resources because of isolation; a situation that is compounded through factors such as geography, language, culture, age, and poverty.

For the above groups, and across the country, this report shows that domestic violence continues to be a major public health, social, and criminal issue that affects thousands of Canadians. The impacts on the lives of those who experience this violence has become even more stark and urgent during the COVID-19 pandemic which has exacerbated the violence in the lives of many women, children, men, and families. Despite the high numbers reported below, our information is limited by the data sources available and accessed which were court decisions and media reports where available. However, depending on the type of domestic homicide, and specifically whether it was followed by the suicide of the perpetrator, information may be even more limited because there will be no court report and often little media coverage. This situation impedes the knowledge base required for the development of informed prevention initiatives, the goal of this project.

Furthermore, as indicated in our first report (Dawson et al., 2018), it was our hope when we began this research that we would be able to work with provincial and territorial coroners and medical examiners to ensure that we captured reliable information on all Canadian domestic homicides. While we were able to do so with some jurisdictions, the impact of COVID-19 prevented the ongoing collection of data as well as our ability to secure agreements with all jurisdictions who were faced with increasing pressures from the pandemic and its many impacts.

However, the database documenting information from court and media files remains enough to underscore the urgency of the crisis of domestic violence and homicide in our country because our numbers remain underestimates of the real situation. As a result, our growing knowledge base needs to be translated into action in the field to support victims and service providers to assess and manage risk as well as to promote safety planning. The challenge across the country is realizing these goals for vulnerable populations in a manner that addresses existing inequities and increases access to resources and services.

Below, we highlight some of the findings from a decade of domestic homicides across our country. [Highlights for the four populations are included in separate sections below.]

- From 2010-2019 in Canada, there were 718 cases of domestic homicide involving 815 victims. There were 718 adult victims (89%) and 87 victims aged 17 and younger (11%).
- Females comprised 79 percent of the adult victims and males were 21 percent of adult victims. Among victims aged 17 and younger, females represented just over half of the victims (58%).
- The largest proportion of adult victims was 25 to 34 years of age (25%). The average age was 41 years. Among child victims, ages ranged from less than one year to 15 years old, with an average age of six years.
- There were 760 accused identified in the 718 cases of domestic homicide. The majority of accused were male (86%). Of the 760 accused, 21 percent died by suicide and another eight percent attempted suicide following the homicide.
- The largest proportion of the accused were aged 35 to 44 years (25%) with an average age of 41 years.

HIGHLIGHTS (cont'd)

- The majority of victims were in a current intimate relationship with the accused (63%) and 25 percent were separated or estranged. The remaining victims shared a non-intimate relationship with their accused.
- Among 63 percent of cases in which the victim and accused were in a current relationship, 25 percent had evidence that separation was imminent or pending. Of those, the majority involved female victims (89%) and male accused (90%).
- Seventy-four children were killed within the context of the domestic homicide; 70 percent were biological children of the victim and/or accused, 24 percent involved stepchildren, and the remaining were other kin of the accused.
- In the 718 cases, nine percent involved the homicide of third parties, such as family members, neighbours, new partners, or other bystanders.
- When information was known, most victims died as a result of stabbing (35%), followed by firearms' injuries (27%), beating (13%), or strangulation (12%). The remaining victims died from various other means.
- Most victims were killed in the home that they shared with the accused (45%), in their own home (20%), or the home of the accused (8%). The remaining victims were killed in public, or semi-public, locations.
- Second-degree murder was the most common initial charge laid (52%) followed by first degree murder charges (35%), manslaughter charges (8%), and other charges related to the homicide (2%; e.g., criminal negligence causing death, accessory after the fact, failure to provide the necessities of life).
- There were 439 domestic homicide victims (54%) that were identified as belonging to one or more of the four populations being focused on in the CDHPVP, including Indigenous, immigrant/refugee, and rural, remote and northern populations as well as children killed in the context of domestic violence.

INTRODUCTION

The *Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations* (CDHPIVP) is a multi-year project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) (2015-2021). The initiative had the following key objectives: (1) to conduct research on domestic homicides in Canada; (2) to identify protocols and strategies that will reduce risk of domestic homicide as well as the violence that leads to domestic homicide; and (3) to share knowledge with and learn from the wider community. In doing so, the CDHPIVP worked to create partnerships that would facilitate collaborative, cross-sectoral research of which the primary aim was to identify unique individual and community-level risk factors that may increase exposure to domestic violence and homicide for specific populations.

The CDHPIVP focused on four populations that experience increased vulnerability to domestic homicide and/or face unique challenges as shown below:

- [Indigenous populations](#)

The rate of domestic homicide is significantly higher for Indigenous women compared to non-Indigenous women in Canada. Research suggests that colonization, poverty, systemic and interpersonal racism, as well as intergenerational violence largely contribute to the heightened risk faced by Indigenous populations.

- [Rural, remote and northern populations](#)

The rate of domestic homicide in rural, remote and northern regions of Canada is often significantly higher than in urban areas. Research identifies potential contributing factors such as precarious employment, unemployment, and/or the role of firearms as well as barriers to leaving abusive relationships such as a lack of transportation and/or concerns surrounding privacy and confidentiality.

- [Immigrant and refugee populations](#)

Immigrant and refugee populations experience language, cultural and legal barriers that make it more difficult to report domestic violence and to access services. Additional barriers that increase their risk are discrimination/racism and economic vulnerability.

- [Children exposed to domestic violence](#)

Children and youth aged 17 and younger who were victims of family-related violence represent a large proportion of all children and youth victims of violent crime. Research has identified child abuse, separation, custody and access issues as common risk factors which typically occur in the context of domestic violence.

The CDHPIVP recognizes that these are only four of the many marginalized and/or vulnerable populations who face higher risk of domestic homicide and/or unique challenges when experiencing domestic violence (e.g. people living with disabilities, seniors, LGBTQ+ communities, etc.). It is our hope that subsequent research will focus on these groups. For more information on the initiatives of the CDHPIVP as well as helping resources, please visit our website: www.cdhipi.ca.

DOCUMENTING DOMESTIC HOMICIDES IN CANADA

One major goal of the CDHPIVP was the development of a national domestic homicide database that could better capture the context of all domestic homicides and, specifically, those that occur for the four groups identified above. While various mechanisms are already in place to document domestic homicides, these official records often underestimate the extent of domestic homicide because of the definitional parameters that are used and/or because they lack the detailed, but important information about the events leading up to the domestic homicide as well as the characteristics of those involved. For example, while the killing of all women and girls (and men and boys) is included as a core focus of data collection for Statistic Canada's Homicide Survey, data is limited, not easily accessible, and has little focus on justice and accountability beyond initial charge laid by police (Dawson and Carrigan, 2020).

With respect to data limitations, despite the fact that women and girls face the most danger from men they know – male partners and family members – there are few variables that specifically capture core information on a consistent basis that could inform prevention initiatives (e.g. prior violence in the relationship by male partners, prior police contacts or court orders, other system contacts, the presence of children and stepchildren and so on). For example, while the variable

INTRODUCTION (cont'd)

'history of family violence' was added to the survey in 1991, it focuses on family violence more broadly (e.g. spousal abuse, child or parent battering) between family members, and does not always capture the direction of the violence. That is, the accused or the victim may have perpetrated the violence or both parties perpetrated violence against each other. Furthermore, if there were multiple victims, it is only necessary for the accused to have been previously violent against one family member for the history of violence variable to be relevant. Finally, although it may be changing in future data, the history of violence was not available for homicides that occurred between dating partners (Burczycka et al. 2018). In addition, while information on prior criminal convictions is collected for both the victim and the accused, there is no way to determine if these were domestic violence-related convictions given that there is no such offence in the *Canadian Criminal Code*. While domestic violence death reviews improve on these data with more focus on the context surrounding these events, they do not exist in all jurisdictions, creating an inequity in data availability across the country. Further, the quality of data depends on those seated at the table as well as the materials reviewed (Dawson 2021).

To address the above limitations of current data sources, and responding to the definitional issue, to ensure that all domestic violence-related homicides are captured, the CDHPVP has developed the following definition of domestic homicide:

Domestic homicide is defined as the killing of a current or former intimate partner, their child(ren), and/or other third parties. An intimate partner can include people who are in a current or former married, common-law, or dating relationship (the term dating is used in its broadest sense). Other third parties can include new partners, other family members, neighbours, friends, co-workers, helping professions, bystanders, and others killed as a result of the incident.

While this definition still poses some challenges in a variety of contexts (Fairbairn et al. 2017), its scope is more comprehensive than most official data sources such as the Statistics Canada Homicide Survey. Using this definition, the CDHPVP sought to capture more comprehensive and detailed information concentrating on domestic homicide victims exclusively and emphasizing the marginalization and/or vulnerability of various population subgroups, beginning with the four identified above. For example, the CDHPVP collected information on factors that are more common in, or unique

to, domestic homicides including, but not limited to, more nuanced information on victim-accused relationship such as relationship length; if separated when homicide occurred and for how long; history of previous separations if more than one; whether there was a new partner in the victim's life; presence of stepchildren; detailed history of domestic violence; and prior agency contact. These and other well-documented risk factors are not systematically captured in the Homicide Survey despite the significant role they often play in domestic homicides (Campbell et al., 2003; Liem & Reichelmann 2014).

DEVELOPING THE DATABASE

The CDHPVP database drew information from the public domain including media and court documents which has increasingly become the primary data sources globally in lieu of restricted access of other more official databases (Cullen et al., 2020). With the growth of information technology, these sources are now easier to access and retrieve, either for free or for a small, monthly subscription fee. Given increasing reliance on media sources, the quality of information documented in the media has been compared to information contained in official sources. While this work is in its infancy, some research conducted in the United States has shown that these data sources are often as accurate as official sources when documenting the gender, age, and race/ethnicity of the victim and the accused (Heide & Boots, 2007; Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017). Moreover, media are often found to be more informative when determining victim-accused relationship, whether they had children together (Parkin & Gruenewald, 2017) and for situational context, providing a more complete picture of the crime (Genovesi et al., 2010; Shon & Lee, 2016).

Using detailed media and court document search strategies, lists of victims were constructed and numbers compared to those provided in annual reports published by the Statistics Canada Homicide Survey. Despite the broader definition adopted by the CDHPVP, this allows for an assessment of how complete our lists. For all identified cases, a data collection instrument developed specifically for the CDHPVP project was used to code information on a variety of variables, some of which are reported on below.

INTRODUCTION (cont'd)

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

This first report of the CDHPVP covered the period 2010 to 2015. This report continued to collect data for the earlier set of cases while documenting cases as they occurred for the latter four-year period, 2016-2019, comprising a 10-year period for analyses. Focusing on this information, **Section I** of this report focuses on general trends for all domestic homicides that have occurred nationwide between and including 2010 and 2019.

Section II of this report focuses on trends and patterns documented across each of the four populations being focused upon: Indigenous; immigrant/refugee; rural, remote, and northern; and children killed within the context of domestic violence.

It is important to emphasize that these data capture *minimum* estimates of the number of domestic homicides that have occurred during this period as well as the characteristics of the killings and those involved. Given information was drawn from publicly available sources (e.g., media files and court documents), what we know is restricted to the information available at the time of this report. In addition, while the information is as reliable as official statistics in many respects as discussed above, media coverage and/or court documents more often report affirmative characteristics (e.g. whether the victim/perpetrator had a specific characteristic, such as a prior criminal record, children, etc.) rather than those characteristics that are absent. This is also typically the case with official statistics, but it is a limitation that should be kept in mind when reviewing the trends and patterns below.

Similarly, numbers for each population of focus are also minimum estimates because some investigations for some cases are still ongoing, or information has been limited to date. Therefore, it was not always possible to determine whether a case was associated with the specific population being examined. The CDHPVP further acknowledges that some victims' deaths remain unsolved and, therefore, are not captured in this report while other victims may currently be classified as missing.

In summary, trends and patterns are based on available information and this is indicated where possible when describing results. In reviewing the data in the following sections, it is important to be reminded of the meaning of absolute numbers and per capita figures. For example, the number of total domestic homicides in Ontario may be high in absolute terms; however, it may be smaller when calculated

on a per capita basis since about 40% of the Canadian population lives in Ontario. On the other hand, a small number of domestic homicides in the Northwest Territories may seem less significant until one considers the population is only about .1% of the Canadian population. As well, there are variations by year that may not represent a significant pattern, but rather are indicative of random fluctuations only. For example, a homicide-suicide involving multiple deaths may skew the statistics for that year but do not represent a pattern over time. Finally, please note that due to rounding, some percentage totals may not equal 100 percent.

DOMESTIC HOMICIDE PATTERNS & TRENDS (2010-2019)

Over a 10-year period in Canada (2010-2019), there were 718 cases of domestic homicide involving 815 victims and 760 accused. There were 718 adult victims (89%) and 87 victims aged 17 and younger (11%).¹ ² Of the 815 victims, 26% were killed as part of a homicide-suicide (N=210).

Among the 815 domestic homicide victims, 439 (54%) were identified as belonging to one or more of the four populations being focused on in the CDHPVIP project. Of the 439 victims identified as belonging to at least one vulnerable population:

- 103 were Indigenous (23%). Of this group, 68 (66%) lived in an RRN area of the country, and 10 (10%) were children killed in the context of domestic violence
- 252 were killed in an RRN area (57%). Of this group, 68 (27%) were Indigenous, seven (3%) identified as immigrants/refugees, and 33 (13%) were children killed in the context of domestic violence
- 128 were identified as immigrants/refugees (29%). Of this group, seven (5%) lived in an RRN area, and six (5%) were children killed in the context of domestic violence
- 74 children were killed in the context of domestic violence (17%). Of this group, 33 (46%) lived in RRN areas, 10 (14%) were Indigenous, and six (8%) were either first- or second-generation immigrants.

Because our data are restricted to information that has been made public, these figures are a minimum estimate given that it was not always possible to determine whether the victim belonged to any one of the four vulnerable populations.

Below we present patterns and trends for all domestic homicide victims before presenting results for each vulnerable group focused upon by the CDHPVIP. All percentages reported below may not equal 100 due to rounding. Most numbers reported below are victim-based. As such, it will be noted if the analyses change to accused-, or case-based.

¹The age of 10 victims was unknown; however, each of these victims were killed by a spouse and most had children and, as such, it can be concluded that they were adult victims.

²Approximately 85 percent of the victims aged 17 and younger were children killed in the context of domestic violence. Fifteen percent, however, were killed by a dating partner or killed inadvertently (e.g. one case involved the accused causing a car crash killing two strangers in an attempt to kill himself and his children and the other involved the accused killing his girlfriend's mother and sister).

ALL DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS

PATTERNS OVER TIME AND BY GEOGRAPHY

Annual distribution: The number of domestic homicide victims killed each year ranged from 64 to 98, with an average of 82 victims per year. Specifically, Chart 1 shows that 2010 was a particularly deadly year in terms of domestic violence and 2016 saw the fewest victims. It is likely, however, that these figures will change as homicide cases move through the criminal justice system and relationships shared between the victim and accused are reported publicly for the more recent years.

CHART 1. ANNUAL DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS, CANADA, 2010-2019 (N=815)



Geographic distribution: Table 1 shows a jurisdictional breakdown of the number and percentage of victims killed in the context over a 10-year period in Canada. Table 1 also adjusts for population size by providing the percentage of Canadians living in each jurisdiction and the calculated rate of domestic homicide for each province or territory. For example, as depicted in Table 1, the greatest number and proportion of victims were killed in Ontario (N=269 and 33%, respectively). However, adjusting for its population size, its rate of domestic homicide was among the lowest (1.85) and below the calculated national rate of 2.17 per 100,000 residents.³

³ Rates were calculated based on the number of domestic homicide victims killed in each jurisdiction per 100,000 of the total population. Calculations based on 2019 population data. All rates except Quebec, exceed the homicide rate reported by Statistics Canada (1.80 per 100,000) because CDHPVP rates were calculated based on the number of victims killed over a 10-year period, whereas Statistics Canada calculates their rate on an annual basis. Aside from Ontario and British Columbia, the calculated rates are higher than Statistics Canada's calculations.

ALL DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS (cont'd)

TABLE 1. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS, CANADA, 2010-2019 (N=815)

Jurisdiction	Total number of victims	Percent of total victims	Percent of Canadian population	Rate of domestic homicide
Ontario	269	33	39	1.85
Quebec	134	16	23	1.58
Alberta	127	16	12	2.91
British Columbia	93	11	14	1.83
Manitoba	52	6	4	3.80
Saskatchewan	46	6	3	3.92
New Brunswick	27	3	2	3.48
Nova Scotia	25	3	3	2.58
Nunavut	16	2	<1	41.44
Newfoundland & Labrador	13	2	1	2.48
Northwest Territories	8	1	<1	17.77
Prince Edward Island	4	<1	<1	2.54
Yukon	1	<1	<1	2.41

Largely consistent with historical patterns, and aligned with findings in our previous report (Dawson et al., 2018), Table 1 also shows that the highest domestic homicide rates were in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, followed by Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The lowest rates were found in Quebec and British Columbia.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF VICTIMS AND ACCUSED

Gender of the victim: When including both adult and child victims, results showed that the majority of victims were female (77%; N=626) and almost one quarter were male (23%; N=188).⁴ Examining adult victims only, 79 percent were female (N=576) and the remaining 21 percent were male (N=151). Among victims aged 17 and younger, females represented 58 percent of the victims (N=50) and males comprised 43 percent of victims (N=37).

Age of the victim: Victims ranged in age from newborns to 92 years old with an average age of 38 years. When children killed in the context of domestic homicide were excluded, victim ages ranged from 14 to 92 years old with an average age of 41 years. Among children killed in the context of domestic violence, victim age ranged from newborns to 15 years old, with an average age of six years.

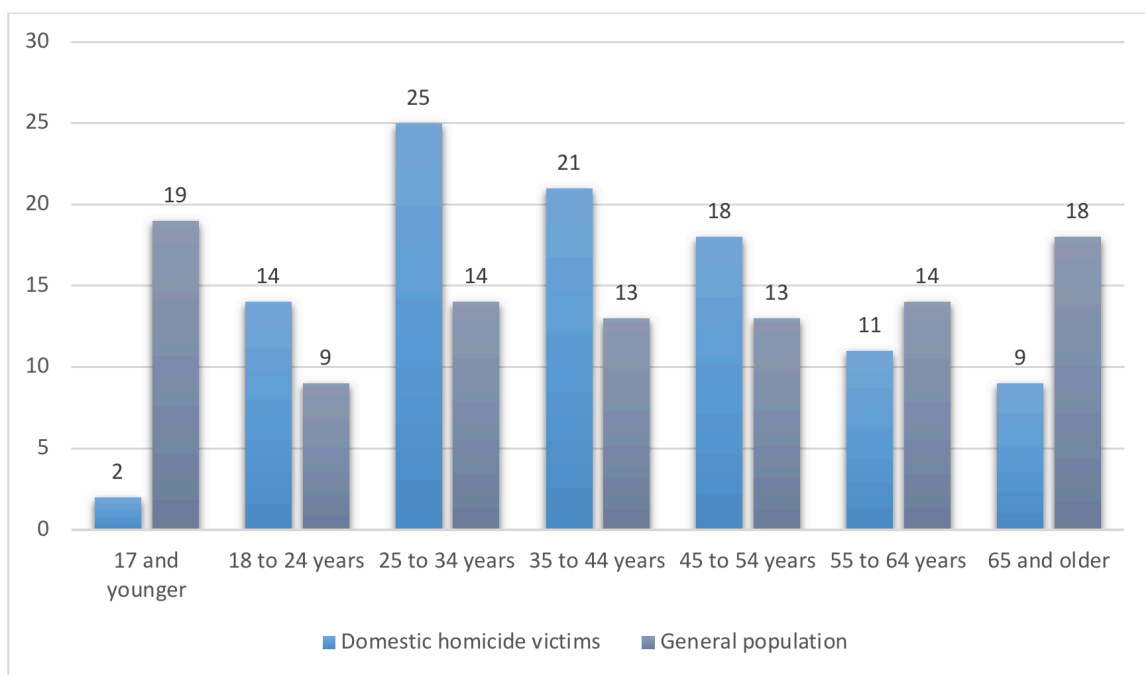
Chart 2 provides the percentage of domestic homicide victims in each age category with the proportion of similarly aged Canadians in the general population. As shown, the largest proportion of victims was in the 25 to 34-year age category (25%; N=186), followed closely by those aged 35 to 44 years (21%; N=154). The smallest proportion of victims was 17 or younger (2%; N=13) and 65 or older (9%; N=65).

⁴The gender of one victim was not reported.

ALL DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS (cont'd)

When comparing these figures with the proportion of similarly aged individuals in the general population, we can see how some age groups are overrepresented and others underrepresented. For example, domestic homicide victims aged 18 to 54 years were overrepresented compared to their presence in the general population (Statistics Canada, 2021). Whereas victims aged 17 or younger as well as those aged 55 or older were underrepresented when compared to age demographics in the general population (Statistics Canada, 2021).

CHART 2. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS COMPARED TO AGE COMPOSITION OF THE GENERAL POPULATION IN CANADA (N=731)⁵



Marital status of the victim: Focusing on victims where this information was known (77%) and excluding 74 child victims, almost an equal proportion of victims was legally married (33%; N=189) or in a common-law relationship longer than one month (30%; N=173). Almost one in four victims (23%; N=130) were estranged, including legal separations (13%; N=73), common-law separations (9%; N=50), and those who were divorced (1%; N=7). A smaller proportion of victims was in a short-term common-law relationship (7%; N=42), had never married (6%; N=31), or were widowed (1%; N=6).

Victims who were pregnant: Of all adult female victims, 11 victims were reported to be pregnant.

Gender of the accused: There were 760 accused identified in the 718 cases of domestic homicide, the majority of which were male (86%; N=648). Females comprised a much smaller proportion (14%; N=108) and two of the accused were transgender (<1%).⁶

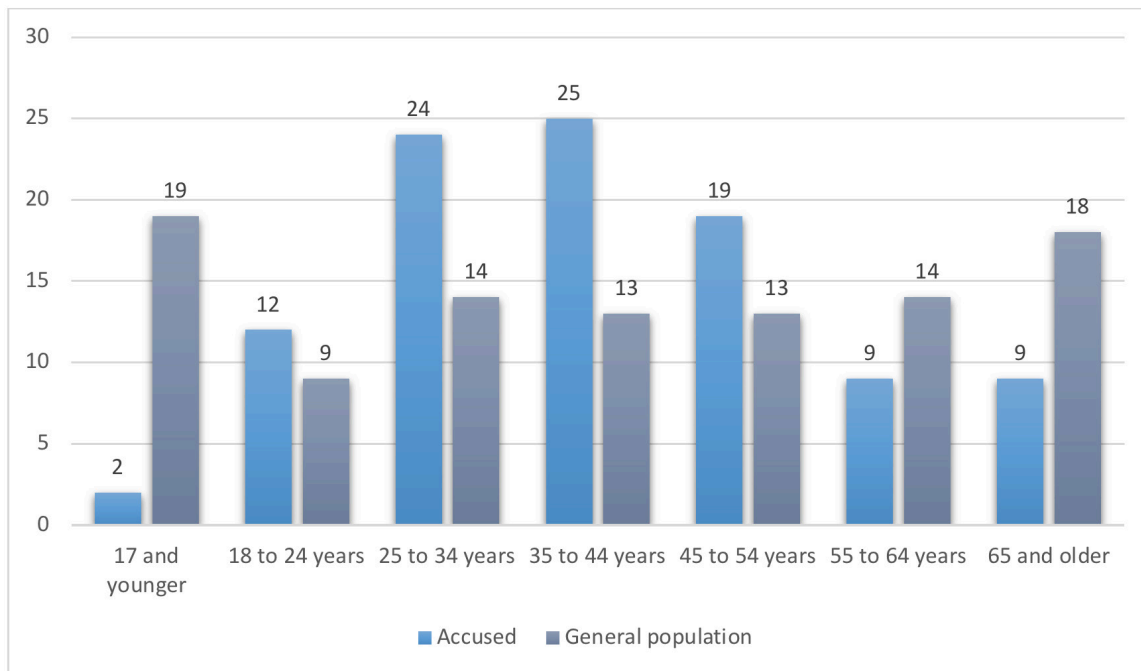
⁵Children killed within the context of domestic violence and the 10 victims whose age was not publicly reported are not included in this chart.

⁶The gender of two accused was not reported.

ALL DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS (cont'd)

Age of the accused: The accused's age ranged from 13 years old to 90 years old with an average age of 41 years.⁷ As shown in Chart 3, almost half of all accused were between the ages of 25 to 44 years (49%; N=368) and the smallest proportion was 17 years or younger (2%; N=11). Similar to domestic homicide victims, those aged 18 to 54 years were overrepresented compared to the demographic composition of the general population, and those aged 17 or younger and 55 or older were underrepresented.

CHART 3. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUALS ACCUSED OF COMMITTING DOMESTIC HOMICIDE COMPARED TO AGE COMPOSITION OF THE GENERAL POPULATION IN CANADA (N=747)



Marital status of accused: Based on information available regarding the accused's marital status (78%), mirroring trends observed among victims, almost an equal proportion of accused was legally married (32%; N=192) or in a common-law relationship for more than one month (30%; N=179). Over one quarter of all accused (26%; N=155) were estranged, including legal separations (14%; N=83), common-law separations (10%; N=61), and those who were divorced (2%; N=11). A smaller proportion of accused was in a short-term common-law relationship (6%; N=37) or had never been married (5%; N=29).

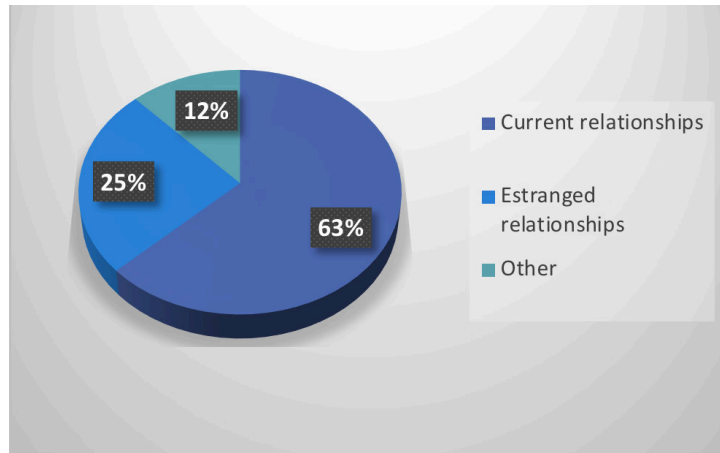
Victim-accused relationship

Excluding children killed in the context of domestic violence, Figure 1 shows that the majority of victims were in a current intimate partner relationship with their accused (63%; N=463) and one quarter were estranged from their accused (25%; N=183). The remaining 12 percent shared another type of non-intimate relationship with the accused (N=89) and this category often includes collateral or secondary victims, which will be discussed in further detail below.

⁷ The age of 13 accused was not reported. The 13-year-old perpetrator, known as H, because he cannot be identified under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, shot his father and was later acquitted of all charges due to the severe abuse the father perpetrated against his wife, the mother of the perpetrator, and the children, including the 13-year-old boy. For more information, see: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/alberta-judge-acquits-boy-of-murder-who-shot-abusive-dad-to-protect-mom/article26759032/>

ALL DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS (cont'd)

FIGURE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIM-ACCUSED RELATIONSHIPS (N=735)⁸



Although not shown in Figure 1, among current intimate partner relationships, almost an equal proportion of victims was legally married (25%; N=184) or shared a common-law relationship with their accused (23%; N=170). The remaining 15 percent were in a dating relationship (N=107). The majority of estranged relationships were marital, including legal and common-law (17%; N=121) and the remaining eight percent were former dating relationships (N=59).

Separation: Research recognizes that separation/estrangement is often a precursor to lethal violence even if physical separation has yet to occur (Hyden & Hyden, 1999; Bruton & Tyson, 2017). That is, the decision to leave a relationship, or to tell a partner that the relationship is ending, can often end in a domestic homicide. Among 63 percent of cases in which the victim and accused were in a current relationship, there was evidence that separation was imminent or pending in 25 percent of the cases (N=115). Of those, the majority involved female victims (89%; N=272) and male accused (90%; N=277), also supporting research that shows separation/estrangement is most often a risk factor for women being killed by male partners. Some indicators for pending separation including that the victim shared with family or friends her desire to leave, initiated the accused moving out, searched for an alternative residence, and/or changed the locks on the home.

Children: Focusing on cases where this information was known (84%, N=684), the victim and accused had children together in 34 percent of cases (N=230). Among those cases, the number of children ranged from one to six. Information was not reliably reported on custody arrangements in cases where the victim and accused were separated.

There were 74 children killed within the context of domestic homicide during this period, 70 percent of which were the biological children of the primary victim and/or accused (N=52). Another 24 percent were stepchildren of the accused (N=18), and six percent of victims shared an other relationship with the accused (N=4). A total of 50 percent of all child homicides could be categorized as familicides in which multiple members of the family, including children, were killed (N=37). All but one familicide was committed by a male accused (96%; N=27).

⁸ Six victims (1%) shared an intimate partner relationship with their accused although the specific type and/or status of the relationship was not specified in public documents; therefore, they are not included in this analysis.

ALL DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS (cont'd)

Collateral victims: Research has begun to highlight the importance of documenting incidences of domestic homicide in which individuals, in addition to the primary target, were killed because they were present at the scene or were associated with the primary victim (Meyer & Post, 2013). Smith et al. (2014) found that as many as 20 percent of domestic homicide cases involved victims who were killed along with the primary victim, who may or may not have been the intended target, and could be family members, new intimate partners, friends, acquaintances, police officers, and strangers (Smith et al., 2014). The work of the CDHPVIP demonstrates that nine percent of cases involved the homicide of third parties (N=62), a finding that is elaborated upon in the section below.

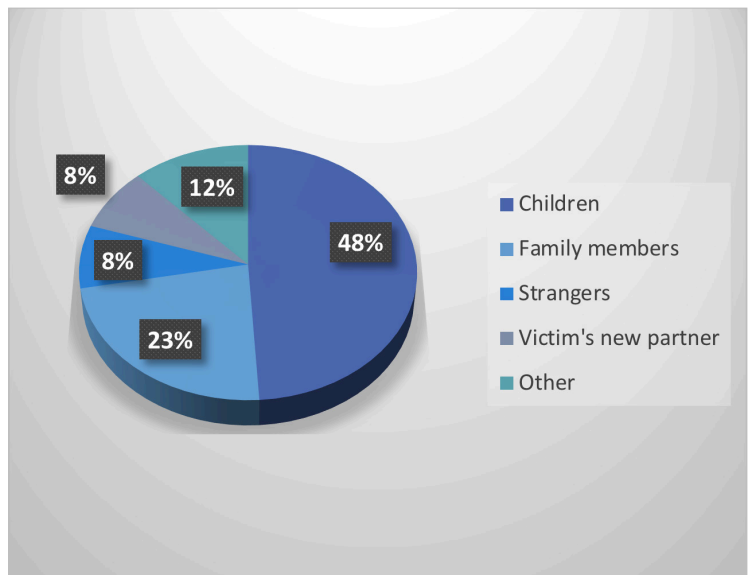
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOMICIDE INCIDENT

Number of victims killed per case: Similar to homicides in general, most domestic homicides involved a single victim (91%; N=656); however, nine percent of cases involved multiple homicide victims (up to eight victims in one case). This is one characteristic – multiple victims – that is more common in domestic homicide than other types of homicide. Multiple victim domestic homicides are almost exclusively committed by a male (94%; N=58).

In multiple victim cases, the primary or target victim was most often a current or estranged intimate partner (77%; N=48), the biological child of the accused (19%; N=12) or shared another type of relationship (3%; N=2). In nearly one half all cases involving multiple victims (45%; N=28), the accused committed familicide, killing his intimate partner and at least one biological or stepchild in quick succession. The CDHPVIP data supports research findings that familicide cases are often perpetrated exclusively by male accused (96%; N=27).

As displayed in Figure 2, when multiple victims were killed, excluding the primary victim, the largest group of collateral victims was biological children of the accused and/or the primary victim (48%; N=47), either the accused's biological child (30%; N=29) or the primary victim's biological child (accused's stepchild; 19%; N=18). Other collateral victims included family members of the victim or accused (23%; N=22), strangers (8%; N=8), and new partners of the victim (8%; N=8). A smaller proportion of cases, forming the other category in Figure 2, involved the death of friends or neighbours of the victim (6%; N=6), estranged intimate partners of the accused (4%; N=2),⁹ and other relationship types (2%; N=4).

FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF VICTIM-ACCUSED RELATIONSHIP AMONG COLLATERAL VICTIMS (N=97)



⁹One case involved the accused killing three estranged intimate partners in the same day.

ALL DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS (cont'd)

Number of accused: The majority of domestic homicides involved one accused (95%; N=685). In the remaining five percent of the cases, two to four accused were involved (N=33).

Method: When method of killing was known (85%; N=694), most victims died as a result of stabbing (35%; N=244), shooting (27%; N=187), beating (13%; N=87) or strangulation (12%; N=86). In the remaining 13 percent of cases, victims died by arson (5%; N=31), vehicular injuries (3%; N=18), smother/suffocation (2%; N=17), and other means (e.g., drowning, pushed, etc.; 3%; N=7).

Excessive violence: Based on the information available (67%; N=543), almost half of all victims were killed with excessive force (46%; N=252). This means that a sizable proportion of victims were killed with multiple methods (e.g., stabbed and beaten) or the repeated use of one method (e.g., stabbed multiple times).

Weapon used: When this information was known (81%; N=658), 76 percent of victims were killed with a weapon (N=502). Knives were the most common weapon (44%; N=219), followed by firearms (22%; N=113), bars/bats/sticks (3%; N=14), vehicles (3%; N=15), or another type of weapon (e.g., hammer, carving fork; 7%; N=37). Five percent of cases involved the use of multiple weapons. Another 15 percent of cases involved a weapon, but the weapon type was not reported (N=78).

Sexual assault: There was no mention of sexual assault in public documents for 62 percent of victims (N=502) and for 36 percent of the victims (N=293), it was determined that a sexual assault did not occur. For the remaining two percent of victims (N=20), there was evidence of a sexual assault (1%; N=8) or circumstantial evidence of a sexual assault occurring (1%; N=12).

Witnesses: Focusing on homicides for which the presence of witnesses was known (76%; N=618), the largest proportion of domestic killings did not have witnesses present (71%; N=436). This observation aligns with prior research on domestic violence/homicide for which the presence of witnesses is rare (Carman et al., 2017; Hayes, 2018). When witnesses were present (N=182), the homicide was most often witnessed by the children of the victim and/or accused (31%; N=56), third parties such as coworkers, police, or strangers (27%; N=50), family members of the victim and/or accused (18%; N=32), friends of the victim (12%; N=22), neighbours (10%; N=19), or the victim's new intimate partner (2%; N=3).

Location of crime: Most victims were killed in the home they shared with the accused (45%; N=368), in their own home (20%; N=165), or the home of the accused (8%; N=72). The remaining 27 percent of victims were killed in other locations including 12 percent (N=100) of the victims who were killed in a public location such as on the street, in a park, or at a place of business. About eight percent of the victims (N=63) were killed in a private or semi-private, location such as an institution, hotel, or rooming house. The remaining seven percent were killed at an other (N=6) or unknown location (N=41).

ALL DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS (cont'd)

CASE OUTCOME

Suicide: Of the 760 accused, 21 percent died by suicide (N=158) and another eight percent attempted suicide following the homicide (N=60).¹⁰ Accused who died by suicide were primarily male (98%; N=154) and most often died by shooting (44%; N=69), stabbing (8%; N=13), or hanging (6%; N=10). The remaining suicide methods included arson (4%; N=6), jumping from height (4%; N=6), being hit by a car (2%; N=3),¹¹ poison (1%; N=2), or drowning (1%; N=2). Two accused died by suicide using other means (1%) and the suicide method was not reported for the remaining 29 percent of accused (N=45).

Accused who attempted suicide, but did not die, were also primarily male (92%; N=55) and most often attempted suicide by stabbing (32%; N=19), drug overdose (15%; N=9), shooting (8%; N=5), or vehicular injuries (e.g., intentionally crashed car or jumped in front of car; 8%; N=5). The remaining methods varied including arson (3%; N=2), hanging (3%; N=2), poisoning (2%; N=1), jumping from height (2%; N=1), or other (13%; N=8). The exact method used to attempt suicide was not reported for the remaining accused (12%; N=7).

Criminal justice response: Focusing on accused who did not die by suicide (N=592), second-degree murder was the most common charge laid (52%; N=308) followed by first degree murder (35%; N=209), manslaughter (8%; N=50), and other charges related to the homicide (2%; N=10; e.g., criminal negligence causing death, accessory after the fact, failure to provide the necessities of life). Two percent of accused died or were killed before charges were laid (N=10) and this information was not reported for one percent of the accused (N=5).

¹⁰An additional 10 accused (1%) were injured but it was not clear whether these injuries were self-inflicted.

¹¹Three cases involved the accused deliberately driving his vehicle into the path of oncoming traffic.

DOMESTIC HOMICIDES AMONG INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

According to the definition adopted by the CDHPVP, Indigenous is an inclusive term to encompass all Indigenous peoples and identities, including status, non-status, Indian, Aboriginal, Native, First Nation, Métis and Inuit who live on or off reserve and in settlement lands per the Land Claims Settlement Agreements in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. While Indigenous peoples comprise the youngest and fastest growing population in Canada (Peters et al., 2018; Statistics Canada, 2017), they continue to make up only five percent of the Canadian population.

Despite this minority status, they have been and continue to be overrepresented as victims of domestic violence and homicide (Arriagada, 2016; Miladinovic & Mulligan, 2015; Statistics Canada, 2017; The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). This finding also remains true based on our current data; Indigenous victims comprised 13 percent of all domestic homicide victims identified by the CDHPVP. A figure that likely underestimates the true prevalence due to the reliance on public documents which may not always report this information.

The analyses reported in the above section is repeated here, with a focus on Indigenous peoples. Again, percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding. Highlights are provided first followed by more detailed trends and patterns.

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- There were 103 Indigenous domestic homicide victims identified in the period from 2010 – 2019, representing 13 percent of all domestic homicide victims.
- The largest proportion of Indigenous homicide victims identified as First Nations (71%), 11 percent identified as Inuit, and two percent as Métis. The victim's Indigenous group was not documented publicly for the remaining victims.
- The majority of adult Indigenous domestic homicide victims were female (73%) and over three-quarters of Indigenous child victims (age 17 years and younger) were female (80%).
- The largest proportion of adult Indigenous victims were 25 to 34 years of age (30%), with an average age of 33 years.
- There were 97 individuals accused in the 93 cases involving an Indigenous victim. Most accused were male (73%). Their ages ranged from 18 to 60 years, with an average age of 33. This aligns with the relative age of the Indigenous population in general which is younger, on average, than the general population.
- Of the 97 accused, almost three-quarters were reported to also be Indigenous (73%).
- The majority of Indigenous cases involved current intimate relationships (79%). Of which, 66 percent involved common-law relationships, 26 percent dating, and eight percent legal marriages. Of those in an estranged relationship (15%), equal proportions were separated spouses or former dating partners. The remaining victims shared a non-intimate relationship with their accused.
- When information was known, most victims died as a result of stabbing (40%), following by beating (34%), firearms' injuries (11%), or arson (9%). The remaining victims died of various other means.
- It is important to recognize intersecting identities of many Indigenous domestic homicide victims. For example, two-thirds of Indigenous victims (66%) resided in a rural, remote, or northern region of the country. Ten percent of the Indigenous victims were children.

DOMESTIC HOMICIDES AMONG INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

PATTERNS OVER TIME AND BY GEOGRAPHY

Annual distribution: As shown in Chart 4, the largest proportion of Indigenous victims were killed in 2015 with 18 victims and eight more than the average across the ten years examined. While random fluctuations in homicides are expected from year to year, these figures likely underestimate the true number of Indigenous peoples killed within the context of domestic violence as noted.

The majority of Indigenous homicide victims were First Nations (71%; N=73), 11 percent identified as Inuit (N=11), and two percent as Métis (N=2). The victim's Indigenous group was not documented publicly for the remaining 17 percent of victims (N=17). These figures are in partial alignment with 2016 census data recording Indigenous identity. Specifically, the largest proportion of individuals identifying as Indigenous were First Nations (58%), followed by Métis (35%), and Inuit (4%).¹² This data indicates that Inuit people are overrepresented as victims of domestic homicide relative to their proportion in the Canadian population.

CHART 4. ANNUAL DISTRIBUTION OF INDIGENOUS DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS, CANADA, 2010-2019 (N=103)



Geographic distribution: Similar to patterns reported for all domestic homicide victims, the largest proportion of Indigenous victims were killed in Ontario (20%) where Indigenous peoples comprise only about three percent of the population. The second largest proportion of victims was killed in Manitoba (18%), where approximately 18 percent of the population identify as Indigenous (Statistics Canada, 2020). The fewest number of Indigenous peoples were killed in Quebec (4%), the Atlantic Provinces (6%), and Yukon (1%).

¹²The remaining three percent of Indigenous peoples surveyed have multiple identities or do not identify as any of the three but have Registered or Treaty Indian Status (Statistics Canada, 2019).

DOMESTIC HOMICIDES AMONG INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

TABLE 2. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF INDIGENOUS DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS, CANADA, 2010-2019 (N=103)

Jurisdiction	Total number of Indigenous victims	Percent of total Indigenous victims	Percent of population identifying as Indigenous
Ontario	21	20	3
Manitoba	19	18	18
Alberta	13	13	7
Saskatchewan	13	13	16
British Columbia	11	11	6
Nunavut	10	10	86
Northwest Territories	5	5	51
Quebec	4	4	2
Newfoundland & Labrador	3	3	9
New Brunswick	2	2	4
Nova Scotia	1	1	6
Yukon	1	1	23

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIGENOUS VICTIMS AND ACCUSED

Gender of the victim: Almost three quarters of all Indigenous adult victims were female (73%; N=68). Females also comprised the largest proportion of Indigenous children killed in the context of domestic violence (80%; N=8)

Age of the victim: The age of Indigenous domestic homicide victims ranged from one year old to 67 years old, with an average age of 31 years. This is similar to their average age in the general population in 2017.¹³ When excluding children killed in the context of domestic violence, the ages ranged from 16 years to 67 years old, with an average age of 33 years. The largest proportion of adult Indigenous victims was between the ages of 25 to 34 (30%; N=27), followed by 18 to 24 (28%; N=25), 35 to 44 (19%; N=17), 45 to 54 (18%; N=16), 55 to 64 (2%; N=2), 17 and younger (2%; N=2), where the smallest proportion of victims were aged 65 years and older (1%; N=1).

Gender of the accused: There were 97 individuals accused of committing 93 cases of domestic homicide involving an Indigenous victim. The majority of accused were male (73%; N=70) and the remainder were female (27%; N=26).¹⁴ This gender gap is distinct, and narrower, compared to the distribution of male-to-female accused for domestic homicides in Canada generally (86% and 14% respectively), but consistent with trends in other research (see Regoeczi, 2001).

¹³The exact age of three Indigenous (adult) victims was not reported.

¹⁴The gender of one accused was not reported.

DOMESTIC HOMICIDES AMONG INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

Age of the accused: The age of the accused ranged from 18 years to 60 years, with an average age of 33 years.¹⁵ The largest proportion of individuals accused of committing a domestic homicide against an Indigenous person was the 25-to-34-year age group (31%; N=29), followed by those aged 18 to 24 (27%; N=25), 35 to 44 (24%; N=22), and 45 to 54 (17%; N=16). The smallest proportion of accused were aged 55 to 64 (1%; N=1). Again, this aligns with the age of the Indigenous populations which is generally younger, on average, than the general population.

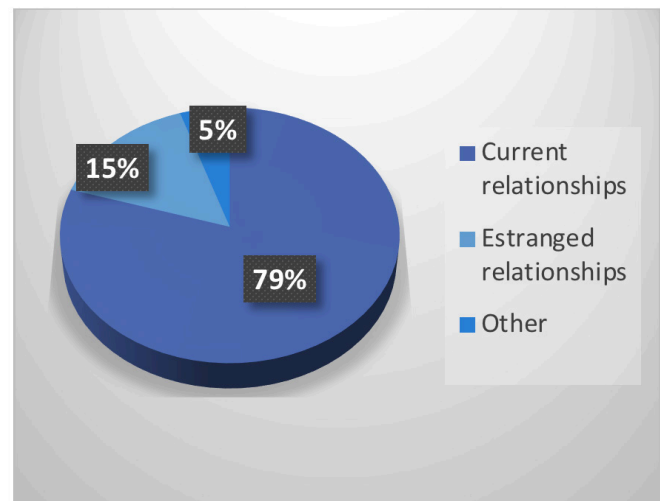
Identification of the accused: Of all individuals accused of committing a domestic homicide against an Indigenous person, 73 percent (N=71) were reported to also be Indigenous. Of which, 69 percent were of First Nations descent (N=49), seven percent were Inuit (N=5), and six percent were Métis (N=4). The exact Indigenous group the accused belonged to was not made public for the remaining 18 percent of accused (N=13). Research has shown that it is most often the case that homicides occur between individuals of the same race/ethnicity.

VICTIM-ACCUSED RELATIONSHIP

As displayed in Figure 3, the majority of adult victims were in current intimate relationships with their accused (79%; N=73). Of this group, 66 percent of victims were in a current common-law relationship with their accused (N=48), 26 percent were dating (N=19), and eight percent were legally married (N=6). Of those in an estranged relationship with their accused (15%; N=14), equal proportions were separated spouses (e.g., common-law or legal marriage) or were former dating partners (N=7 each). Five victims shared an other relationship with the accused (5%).¹⁶

Among those currently with their intimate partner at the time of the killing, there was evidence that separation was imminent for nine victims/accused (12%). This information, however, was unknown for 78 percent of intact relationships (N=57).

FIGURE 3. RELATIONSHIPS SHARED BETWEEN INDIGENOUS VICTIMS AND THEIR ACCUSED (N=92)¹⁷



¹⁵The age of four accused was not reported.

¹⁶Three victims were involved in a love triangle in which each were killed by their current partner's ex-partner. One victim had a 'friends with benefits' relationship with her accused. The last victim was killed while trying to protect a friend from a violent boyfriend.

¹⁷The exact relationship shared between one victim and her accused was not specified in public documents, but there was evidence to support them being in an intimate partner relationship.

DOMESTIC HOMICIDES AMONG INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

Children: Focusing on cases where this information was known (N=68), the victim and accused had children together in 38 percent of cases (N=26), but well over half did not have children together (56%; N=38). In the remaining six percent of cases, the factor was not applicable because the victim and accused did not share an intimate relationship (N=5). When they did have children in common, the number ranged from one to five children.

Ten Indigenous children were killed in the context of domestic homicide. In these six cases, an equal proportion of victims was the biological or stepchild of the accused (N=5 each). All but one of these children were killed alongside the accused's intimate partner and their biological mother.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE HOMICIDE INCIDENT IN INDIGENOUS CASES

Number of victims killed per case: Most Indigenous domestic homicide incidents involved a single victim (84%; N=86) with the remaining 16 percent (N=7) of cases involving two to five victims killed in a single incident. All but one of the seven multiple victim cases involved the accused killing his current or former intimate partner as the primary target. The remaining case involved an accused killing both his children.¹⁸

Number of accused per case: Most cases of domestic homicide involved a single accused (97%; N=90). Two cases involved two accused each (2%) and one involved three accused (1%).

Method: Where information about method of killing was available (87%; N=90), the largest proportion of victims were stabbed to death (40%; N=36), just over one-third were beaten (34%; N=31), and a smaller proportion were shot (11%; N=10) or died by arson (9%; N=8). The remaining victims died by various other means such as strangulation (2%; N=2), smothering (1%; N=1), hit by a car (1%; N=1), and one accused allowed the victim to die of alcohol toxicity.

Excessive force: Based on the information available (62%; N=64), almost half of all Indigenous victims were killed with excessive force (47%; N=30). This means that a sizable proportion of victims were killed with multiple methods (e.g., stabbed and beaten) or the repeated use of one method (e.g., stabbed multiple times).

Weapon used: Where this information was known (78%; N=52), almost two-thirds of victims were killed with a weapon (65%; N=52). When a weapon was used, the most common weapon was a knife (60%; N=31), followed by firearms (12%; N=6; 5 long guns, 1 handgun), an other type of weapon (8%; N=4), bar/stick (4%; N=2), multiple weapons (4%; N=2), or a vehicle (2%; N=1). The remaining 12 percent of victims were killed with a weapon (N=6), but the type of weapon was not specified.

Witnesses: When this information was available (66%; N=68), there were no witnesses in just over half Indigenous domestic homicides (53%; N=36). When witnesses were present, they were most often a family member of the victim and/or accused (34%; N=11), the child(ren) of the victim and/or accused (16%; N=5), or a friend of the victim (16%; N=5). Other witnesses included third parties such as neighbours, strangers, or other relationship types (34%; N=11).

Location of crime: Most Indigenous victims were killed in the home they shared with the accused (34%; N=35), their own home (18%; N=18), another residence (14%; N=14), or the accused's residence (7%; N=7). Approximately 14 percent (N=14) were killed in a public location (e.g., street or park), and four percent (N=4) were killed in a semi-public location (e.g., rooming house, hotel). The remaining victims were killed in an other (2%; N=2) or unknown location (9%; N=9). This aligns with research on domestic homicides in general which shows they tend to occur more in private residences compared to public locations (Mulligan, Axford, & Solecki, 2015).

¹⁸There was one additional case, not included in the figures reported above, in which the accused killed his intimate partner and their child.

DOMESTIC HOMICIDES AMONG INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

OUTCOME OF CASES IN INDIGENOUS DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

Suicide: Of the 97 individuals accused in cases of Indigenous domestic homicide, 10 percent died by suicide (N=10) and two percent attempted suicide (N=2). Among those who died by suicide, nine were male (90%) and the gender of the one accused could not be determined (10%). The suicide method was unknown for most accused (60%; N=6); however, where known, the four accused died from self-inflicted gunshots (40%). Two male accused attempted suicide; however, the method used was not reported in the media.

Criminal justice response: Focusing on accused who did not die by suicide (N=87), the largest proportion were charged with second degree murder (70%; N=61), followed by manslaughter (20%; N=17), and first-degree murder (11%; N=8). One accused was found dead before charges could be laid.

IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

According to the CDHPVP, immigrants and refugees are a heterogeneous group, coming from different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds (Rossiter et al., 2018). As such, CDHPVP adopts the following definition:

- Immigrants are individuals who have voluntarily chosen to move to a new country to settle forever. Immigrants come from all around the globe and live in countries other than their countries of origin. Immigrants come into the host countries through diverse immigration categories with the intention to settle in the host country. For individuals to be recognized as immigrants, they have to live in the host country for a minimum stay of one year (UNESCO, 2017).
- Refugees are individuals who migrate involuntarily or by force for a variety of reasons, including war, political or religious persecution, or natural disasters.

One challenge with this working definition is that it groups all immigrants and refugees together, notwithstanding their diverse experiences and vulnerabilities. Some newcomers arrive from war-torn countries with experiences of trauma together with the stress of migration. Some newcomers face many barriers to integration including racism and inequitable access to education and employment. As such, it is not possible to generalize across these diverse groups and experiences. There are some common trends in existing research that suggest that immigrants and refugees are no more likely to be involved in violence and domestic violence (e.g. Ibrahim, 2018), but when they are, they may face greater language and cultural barriers in getting support. These issues have been covered more comprehensively in the CDHPVP literature review (Jeffrey et al., 2018) as well as our Domestic Homicide Brief (Rossiter et al., 2018 - <http://cdhpi.ca/domestic-homicide-immigrant-and-refugee-populations>).

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

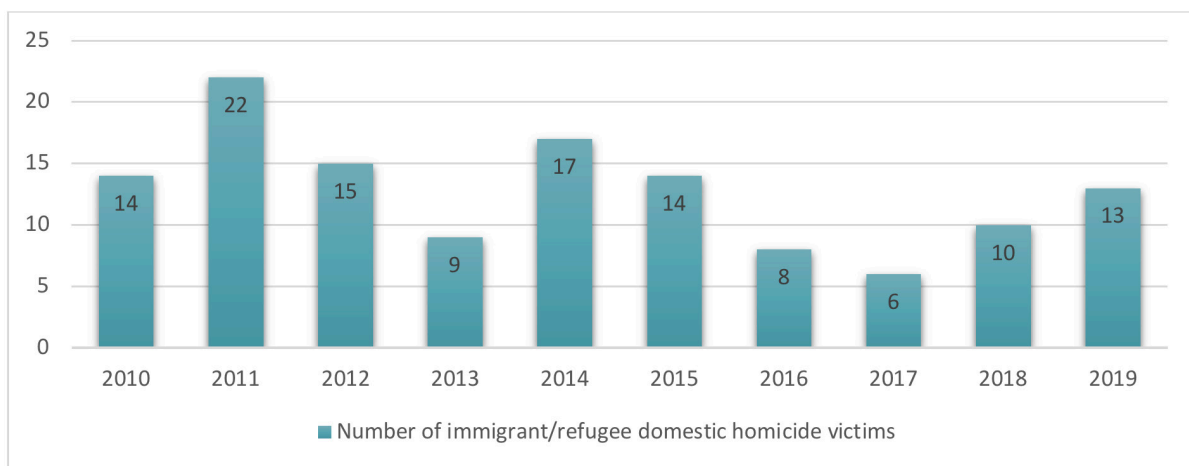
- There were 128 immigrant/refugee domestic homicide victims identified in the period from 2010 – 2019, representing 16 percent of all domestic homicide victims.
- The majority of immigrant/refugee domestic homicide victims were female (86%). Victim age ranged from one year old to 88 years, with an average age of 41 years.
- There were 118 accused identified in the 112 cases of domestic homicide involving an immigrant/refugee victim. The majority were male (92%), with ages ranging from 18 to 88 years, and an average age of 44 years old.
- Three quarters of immigrant/refugee domestic homicide victims were killed in the context of a current or estranged marital relationship. Almost half of all victims were legally married to the accused (47%) and over one-fifth were in an estranged marital relationship (21%), including both legal and common-law unions. A smaller proportion of victims and accused were in a dating, or non-intimate relationship.
- Among victims who were in a current relationship, there was evidence that separation was imminent in almost one-third of the cases (29%), all of which involved female victims and male accused (100%).
- Six immigrant/refugee children were killed in the context of domestic violence. Three of which were biological children of the accused, one was a stepchild, one was an adopted daughter, and the last was a niece of the accused.
- Most immigrant/refugee domestic homicides involved the killing of a single victim (91%), perpetrated by a single accused (96%).
- When information was known, most victims died as a result of stabbing (41%), following by firearms' injuries (22%), beating deaths (16%), or strangulation (10%). The remaining victims died by various other means.

IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

PATTERNS OVER TIME AND BY GEOGRAPHY

Annual distribution: Chart 5 displays the number of domestic homicide victims who were a documented immigrant or refugee. The results show that the highest proportion of victims were killed in 2011 (18%; N=22) and the lowest number in 2017 (5%; N=6). On average, 13 immigrant/refugee victims died annually during this period in the context of domestic violence.

CHART 5. ANNUAL DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS, CANADA, 2010-2019 (N=128)



Geographic distribution: Statistics Canada does not calculate homicide rates for immigrant/refugee populations, but it has been reported that they are at a lower risk of violent victimization in general than Canadian born citizens (Ibrahim, 2018). Table 3 shows their distribution by number and proportion of victims by province and territory.

TABLE 3. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS, CANADA, 2010-2019 (N=128)

Jurisdiction	Total number of immigrant/refugee victims	Percent of total immigrant/refugee victims	Percent of population identifying as immigrant/refugees
Ontario	61	48	29
Alberta	21	16	21
British Columbia	20	16	30
Quebec	13	10	14
Manitoba	9	7	18
Nova Scotia	2	2	6
Saskatchewan	2	2	11

IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

Similar to geographic trends observed in the previous sections, the largest proportion of immigrant/refugees died in Ontario (48%). Differing from above patterns, however, the next largest group were killed in Western Canada (i.e., British Columbia and Alberta) where a sizable proportion of each province identifies as first-generation immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2017). The lowest number were killed in Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan. There were no documented immigrant/refugee victims who died in the context of domestic homicide in the Northwest Territories or Atlantic Provinces with the exception of Nova Scotia.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE VICTIMS AND ACCUSED

Gender of victim: The majority of immigrant/refugee domestic homicide victims were female (86%; N=110). There were six recorded cases involving children killed in the context of domestic violence, 67 percent of which were female (N=4).

Age of victim: The age of victims ranged from one year old to 88 years, with an average age of 41 years.¹⁹ When excluding the six children killed in the context of domestic violence, the ages ranged from 19 years to 88 years of age, with an average age of 42 years. Specifically, the largest proportion of immigrant/refugee victims was in the 25 to 34 year age category (28%; N=34), followed by those aged 35 to 44 (25%; N=30), 45 to 54 years (16%; N=19), 65 or older (12%; N=14), 18 to 24 (10%; N=12) and the smallest proportion were aged 55 to 64 (9%; N=11).

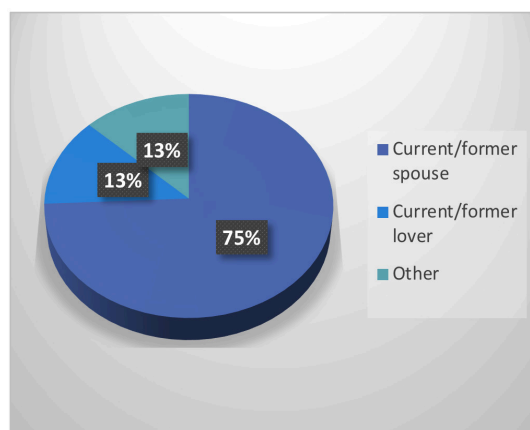
Gender of accused: There were 118 accused identified in the 112 cases of domestic homicide involving an immigrant/refugee victim. The majority of accused were male (92%; N=109), seven percent were female (N=8), and one accused was transgender (1%).

Age of accused: Similar to the age of immigrant/refugee victims, the average age of the accused was 44 years old with a range of 18 years to 88 years.²⁰ The largest proportion of accused was between the ages of 35 and 44 (28%; N=33), 25 to 34 (25%; N=29), 45 to 54 years (22%; N=26), 55 to 64 (10%; N=12). The smallest proportion were 18 to 24 years (5%; N=6) and 65 years or older (9%; N=11).

VICTIM-ACCUSED RELATIONSHIP

As shown in Figure 4, three quarters of immigrant/refugee domestic homicide victims were killed in the context of a current or former marital relationship. Almost one half of the victims were legally married to the accused (47%; N=57) and one fifth were in an estranged marital relationship (21%; N=25), including legal and common-law relationships. Seven percent were in a common-law relationship (N=8), seven percent were former dating partners (N=9) and six percent were currently dating at the time of the homicide (N=7). Approximately 13 percent involved another type of relationship, such as family members of the primary victim and/or accused, new intimate partners of the primary victim, or strangers. Among victims who were in a current relationship, there was evidence that separation was imminent in almost one third of the cases (29%; N=21), all of which involved female victims and male accused (100%).

FIGURE 4. RELATIONSHIPS SHARED BETWEEN IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE VICTIMS AND THEIR ACCUSED (N=122)²¹



¹⁹The age of two adult victims was not reported.

²⁰The age of one accused was not reported.

²¹The six children (younger than 18) who were killed in the context of domestic violence were excluded.

IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

Children: When information was known, the victim and accused had children together in one half of the cases (50%; N=56). Of the 56 cases where the victim and accused had children together, 29 percent (N=16) were separated at the time of the homicide. When information on legal custody arrangements was known (63%; N=10), half of the victims had legal custody (50%; N=5), the victim and accused shared custody in one case (10%), and this information was not applicable due to the age of the children in the remaining 40 percent of cases (N=4). Similarly, when information on physical custody was known (94%; N=15), the victim often had physical custody at the time of the homicide (60%; N=9), one accused had physical custody (7%), and this information was not applicable in the remaining 33 percent of cases (N=5).

Of the six immigrant/refugee children that were killed in the context of domestic violence, three were biological children of the accused (one of which was also the biological child of the primary target), one was a stepchild, one was the adopted daughter of the accused and one was the niece of the accused.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE DOMESTIC HOMICIDE INCIDENT

Number of victims killed per case: The majority of immigrant/refugee domestic homicide cases involved a single victim (91%; N=102), six cases involved two victims (5%), three cases involved three victims (3%), and one case involved eight victims (1%). Of those cases that involved multiple victims, all but one of the primary victims were female and shared an intimate relationship with the accused.²² The case that involved a male primary victim was serial in nature in which the perpetrator targeted eight of his homosexual lovers over a nine-year period.

Excluding the primary victim, the collateral victims were biological kin of the accused and/or primary victim (69%; N=11), estranged lovers (13%; N=2), or third parties such as strangers to the accused or a friend or new partner of the primary target (19%; N=3). The accused committed familicide in one half of the cases involving multiple victims (50%).

Number of accused per case: Most immigrant/refugee domestic homicides involved a single accused (96%; N=107), with the remaining four percent reportedly involving two or three individuals (N=5).

Method: When this information was known (91%; N=116), most victims died of stab wounds (41%; N=48), followed by firearms' injuries (22%; N=25), beatings (16%; N=19), or strangulation (10%; N=12). The remaining methods varied: smothering/suffocation (5%; N=6), arson (3%; N=3), drowning, being pushed, or pushed from height (each at 1%; N=1). There was evidence that multiple methods were used to kill 17 percent of victims (N=19).

Weapon used: When information on weapons was known (84%; N=108), a weapon was used in 82 percent of all homicides involving immigrant/refugee victims (N=88). Focusing on those cases, the most common weapon was a knife (48%; N=42). When a firearm was used, most were handguns (17%; N=15) with a smaller proportion involving long guns (3%; N=3); the type of firearm was not reported for the remaining seven victims who were shot to death (8%). Bats/bars were used in three percent of cases (N=3), and other types of weapons were used to kill the remaining 18 percent of victims (N=19).

²²One case involved a father who killed his two daughters while separating from his wife, the victims' mother.

IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

Excessive force: Based on the information available (70%; N=89), almost three quarters of all immigrant/refugee victims were killed with excessive force (71%; N=63). This means that a sizable proportion of victims were killed with multiple methods (e.g., stabbed and beaten) or the repeated use of one method (e.g., stabbed multiple times).

Witnesses: When this information was available (80%; N=103), there were no witnesses in over two thirds of the cases involving an immigrant/refugee victim (71%; N=73). When witnesses were present (N=30), the largest group were the children of the victim and/or accused (53%; N=16), followed by friends or family members of the victim (13%; N=4), neighbours (13%; N=4), third parties (13%; N=4), or coworkers (3%; N=1). The death of one victim was witnessed, but no further information was available (3%).

Location of crime: Over one half of all domestic homicides occurred in the shared residence of the victim and accused (59%; N=75). Seventeen percent of all victims were killed in their residence (N=22), and less than 10 percent at the accused's home (7%; N=9). Another 13 percent of cases appeared to have occurred in a (semi) public location: outdoors (4%; N=5), other home (4%; N=5), a business (2%; N=3), hotel (2%; N=2), or in a car (1%; N=1). The remaining five percent of victims were killed in an unknown location (N=6).

OUTCOMES OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE CASES FOR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE POPULATIONS

Suicide: Approximately 22 percent (N=26) of accused in immigrant/refugee cases died by suicide and another 10 percent (N=12) attempted suicide. Of those accused who died by suicide, all but one was male and the largest proportion died from gunshot injuries (31%; N=8), followed by stabbing (23%; N=6), or hanging (15%; N=4). Three accused died by jumping from height (12%) and one died in a fire (4%). The method used was not reported for the remaining four accused (15%).

Of those accused who attempted suicide, most were male (92%; N=11) and one accused was transgender (8%). The most common method used to attempt suicide involved being hit by a car (25%; N=3). An equal proportion attempted suicide by inflicting stab wounds, overdosing, or using an alternate method (each at 17%; N=2). Three accused attempted suicide by poison, arson, and drowning (each at 8%).

Criminal justice response: Excluding those accused who died by suicide (N=26), the largest proportion of accused in immigrant/refugee domestic homicides were charged with second degree murder (61%; N=56). Over one third were charged with first degree murder (34%; N=31) and three percent were charged with manslaughter (N=3). One accused was charged with accessory after the fact (1%) and another suspect died before the initial charge was laid (1%).

RURAL, REMOTE, & NORTHERN DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

According to the CDHPVP, rural, remote, or northern (RRN) refers to a community or geographic location with a small and widely dispersed population distribution (rural as less than 10,000) and/or is not accessible by road all year round (remote), and/or designated by the provincial government as being the Northern part of the province (northern; e.g. for Ontario, see <https://nohfc.ca/en/#where-we-serve>). All the territories are considered Northern.

The rate of domestic homicide in rural, remote and northern areas of Canada is notably higher than in urban areas (Beattie et al., 2018; Northcott, 2011). Further, females in rural, remote, and northern areas are at a higher risk of experiencing intimate violence than are similarly-situated urban and suburban females (Rennison, Dekeseredy, & Dragiewicz, 2013).

This section focuses on trends documented across rural, remote and northern populations within the context of domestic homicide.

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

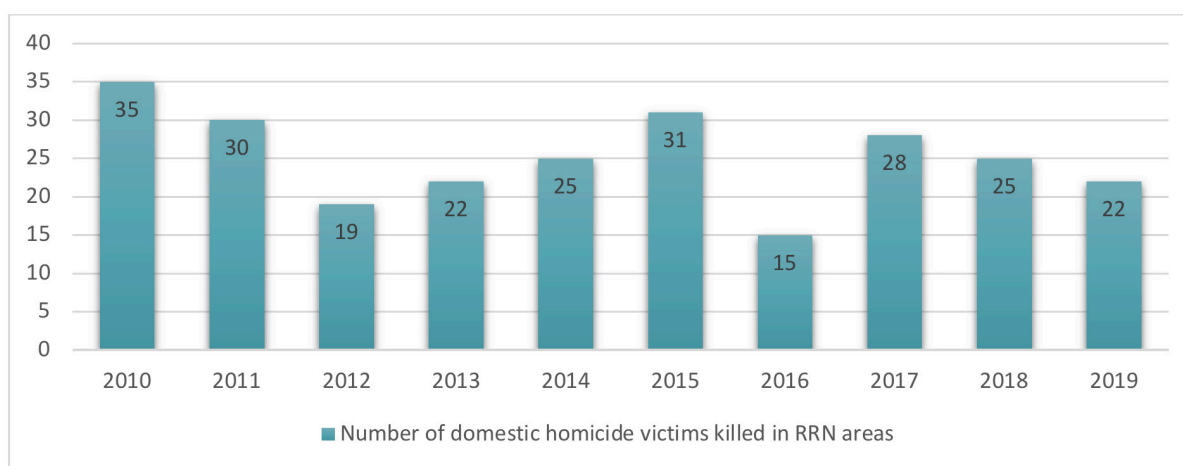
- Nearly one-third of the domestic homicides in Canada from 2010 to 2019 involved RRN populations (N=252 or 31% of the total number of victims).
- The majority of RRN adult victims were female (80%) and just over one half of children killed in RRN areas were female (58%). The victims ranged in age from one year old to 92 years with an average age of 37 years.
- There were 218 accused identified in the 215 cases of domestic homicide in an RRN area, most of which were male (86%). Their ages ranged from 13 to 82 years with an average age of 43 years.
- The majority of victims and accused were in a current intimate relationship (68%). One-third of the victims were in a common-law relationship with the accused (33%), one quarter were legally married (25%), and a fraction were in a dating relationship (10%). The remaining victims shared an estranged or non-intimate relationship with their accused.
- An intersectional analysis of the RRN homicide victims found that over one quarter identified as Indigenous (27%), 13 percent were children, and three percent were immigrant/refugee.
- Thirty-three child victims living in an RRN area were killed in the context of domestic violence. Most of which were the biological child of the accused (64%) or a stepchild (33%), and the remaining were other kin of the accused.
- Most RRN domestic homicides involved a single victim (89%) perpetrated by a single accused (99%). When multiple victims were killed, the primary victim was most commonly a current or former intimate partner (76%) or the biological child of the accused (21%). The most common collateral victims in multiple homicides involved children, either the accused's biological child (32%) or stepchild (32%).
- When information was known, most victims died as a result of firearms' injuries (41%), followed by stabbing (22%), beating (15%), or strangulation (9%). The remaining victims died from various other means.

RURAL, REMOTE, & NORTHERN DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

PATTERNS OVER TIME AND BY GEOGRAPHY

Annual distribution: As shown in Chart 6, the number of domestic homicide victims killed in RRN areas remained relatively stable over the ten years examined, with an average of 21 victims killed each year. There were, however, some annual fluctuations, with the lowest number killed in 2016 (6%; N=15) and the highest in 2010 (14%; N=35).

CHART 6. ANNUAL DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS KILLED IN RRN LOCATIONS, CANADA, 2010-2019 (N=252)



Geographic distribution: Table 4 shows that the largest proportion of domestic homicide victims killed in a RRN location resided in Ontario (22%), followed by Quebec (15%), and Saskatchewan (12%). Ontario was the only province where RRN victims were overrepresented compared to the proportion of the population living in rural areas of the province (Statistics Canada, 2015). The smallest proportion of domestic homicide victims killed in an RRN area resided in Newfoundland and Labrador (2%), Prince Edward Island (2%), and Yukon (<1%).

TABLE 4. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF DOMESTIC HOMICIDE VICTIMS KILLED IN RRN AREAS, CANADA, 2010-2019 (N=252)

Jurisdiction	Total number of RRN victims	Percent of total RRN victims	Percent of population living in rural areas
Ontario	55	22	14
Quebec	37	15	19
Saskatchewan	31	12	33
Alberta	28	11	17
British Columbia	20	8	14
New Brunswick	16	6	48
Nunavut	16	6	52
Manitoba	15	6	28
Nova Scotia	15	6	43
Northwest Territories	8	3	41
Newfoundland & Labrador	6	2	41
Prince Edward Island	4	2	53
Yukon	1	<1	39

RURAL, REMOTE, & NORTHERN DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RRN VICTIMS AND ACCUSED

Gender of the victim: Similar to RRN trends demonstrated in prior research (Beaupré, 2015; Caman et al., 2017), the majority of RRN victims were female (77%; N=193).²³ Distinguishing between adult and child victims, the majority of adult victims were female (80%; N=174) and just over one half of children killed in the context of domestic violence were female (58%; N=19).

Age of the victim: The victims ranged in age from one year old to 92 years old, with an average of 37 years.²⁴ The age of adult victims ranged from 14 years to 92 years old, with an average age of 41 years. When children killed in the context of domestic violence are excluded, and mirroring trends documented in our last report (Dawson et al., 2018), the largest proportion of victims were 25 to 34 years old (25%; N=53), followed by 45 to 54 years (23%; N=48), 35 to 44 (17%; N=36), 18 to 24 (14%; N=29), 65 years or older (10%; N=22), 55 to 64 years (9%; N=20) with the smallest proportion aged 17 or younger (2%; N=4).

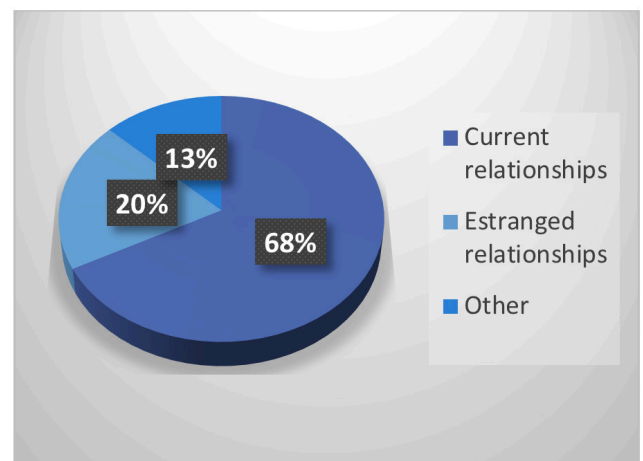
Gender of accused: There were 218 individuals accused in 215 cases of domestic homicide in a RRN location, most of which were male (86%; N=186).²⁵

Age of accused: The age of accused ranged from 13 years to 82 years old with an average age of 43 years.²⁶ This average is two years older than the average age documented in our previous report (Dawson et al., 2018). Similar to trends reported among victims killed in RRN areas, the largest proportion of accused fell into the 35 to 44-year age category (25%; N=53), then 45 to 54 (24%; N=51), 25 to 34 (21%; N=45), 55 to 64 (12%; N=25), 18 to 24 (9%; N=20), 65 or older (8%; N=16), and the smallest proportion were 17 or younger (1%; N=2).

VICTIM-ACCUSED RELATIONSHIP

As displayed in Figure 5, the majority of victims and accused were in a current intimate partner relationship (68%; N=145). Among current relationships, most victims were in a common-law relationship with the accused (33%; N=71), followed by those who were legally married (25%; N=53), and a smaller proportion who were dating (10%; N=21). These findings align with trends documented in our last report and in previous research on violence in intimate partner relationships between urban, suburban, and rural populations. For example, Rennison et al. (2013) discovered that a greater percentage of rural females, in particular, were violently victimized by an intimate male partner than by a stranger or a family member. Among estranged relationships, most involved marital estrangements, including both legal marriages and common-law unions (14%; N=29) and the remaining were in estranged dating relationships (7%; N=14). Finally, the other category included the homicide of one parent, two adult stepchildren, one adult biological child, as well as various other third-party relationships (13%; N=27).

FIGURE 5. RELATIONSHIPS SHARED BETWEEN RRN VICTIMS AND THEIR ACCUSED (N=215)²⁷



²³The gender of one victim was not reported.

²⁴The age of seven adult victims was not reported.

²⁵The gender of two accused was not reported.

²⁶The age of six accused was not reported.

²⁷The 33 children killed in the context of domestic violence in an RRN area were excluded. The exact relationship type and status shared between four victims was not disclosed, although all showed evidence of intimacy.

RURAL, REMOTE, & NORTHERN DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

When the victim and accused were in a current intimate partner relationship (68%), it was often not known whether separation had been imminent (i.e., missing for 55% of cases; N=79). However, there was evidence that separation was imminent in 21 percent of cases (N=30). Of those cases, the majority involved female victims (93%; N=66) and males were the majority of accused (92%; N=65).

Children: When this information was available (75%; N=153), most victims and accused had children together (47%; N=72), but nearly one half did not have children in common (44%; N=68). This information was not applicable in nine percent of the cases (N=13) due to the other, non-intimate, relationship category.

When the victim and accused had children together, the number ranged from one child to five children. Of the 19 cases where the victim and accused were separated and had children together, information on legal custody arrangements was known in 11 cases (58%). Of which, two victims had legal custody (18%). While information on legal custody was not available in other cases, some information was reported on who had physical custody at the time of the homicide (84%; N=16). Based on this information, six cases involved the victim having physical custody (38%), two involved the accused having physical custody at the time of the homicide (13%), and one involved shared custody pending court outcome (6%).

Thirty-three child victims living in an RRN location were killed in the context of domestic violence. Most children killed were the biological child of the accused (64%; N=21) or a stepchild (33%; N=11). One victim was the adopted child of the accused (3%).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RRN DOMESTIC HOMICIDE INCIDENT

Number of victims per case: Most RRN domestic homicides involved a single victim (89%; N=191), followed by cases involving two victims (7%; N=14), three (3%; N=7), four (1%; N=2), and one case involved five victims (<1%). When multiple victims were killed, the primary victim was either a current (38%; N=9) or estranged intimate partner of a male accused (38%; N=9), followed by the biological child of the accused (21%; N=5). One case involved an accused targeting his ex-girlfriend but ended up killing the primary target's sister and mother (4%).

RURAL, REMOTE, & NORTHERN DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

Excluding primary victims, the most common collateral or secondary victims in multiple homicides involved children, either the biological child of the accused (32%; N=12), stepchildren of the accused (32%; N=12), or an adopted child (3%; N=1). Two cases involved the death of other estranged partners of the accused (5%),²⁸ the victim's new intimate partner (5%; N=2), or strangers (11%; N=4). The remaining six victims were family members of the primary victim (8%; N=3), or the accused's parent (3%; N=1). The accused committed familicide in almost two-thirds of all cases involving multiple victims (62%; N=23).

Number of accused per case: The vast majority of RRN domestic homicides were committed by a single accused (99%; N=215) and three cases involved two accused (1%).

Method: Based on publicly available information (83%; N=209), and aligned with findings in our previous report and the literature on rural regions (Beyer, Layde, Hamberger & Laud, 2013), the most common method of killing was by firearm (41%; N=85). The second largest proportion of victims died by stabbing (22%; N=45), followed by beating (15%; N=31), strangulation (9%; N=18), and arson (7%; N=14). The remaining cases involved being hit by a car (4%; N=8), smothering/suffocation (1%; N=3), drowning (1%; N=3), and two victims died by other means (1%). The use of multiple methods was confirmed for nine percent of victims (N=18).

Excessive force: Based on the information available (63%; N=158), almost one third of all RRN victims were killed with excessive force (30%; N=48). This means that a sizable proportion of victims were killed with multiple methods (e.g., stabbed and beaten) or the repeated use of one method (e.g., stabbed multiple times).

Weapon use: When this information was known (79%; N=198), a weapon was used in just over three quarters of all RRN domestic homicides (76%; N=151). A firearm was most common (19% long gun, 10% handgun; N=44), followed by a knife (26%; N=39), another weapon (5%; N=8), a vehicle (5%; N=8), or the use of a bar/bat (2%; N=3). Five percent of victims were killed with multiple weapons (N=7), but the type of weapon was not reported for 28 percent of victims (N=42), often due to the type of firearm not being specified.

Witnesses: When this information was reported (75%; N=189), there was often no witnesses present in most domestic homicides that occurred in an RRN location (67%; N=127). When witnesses were present, most involved the child(ren) of the victim and/or accused (34%; N=21), followed by family members of the victim or accused (27%; N=17), or friends of the victim (8%; N=5). The remaining 31 percent of cases involved the homicide being witnessed by third parties (i.e., strangers, neighbours, police, primary victim's new partner; N=19).

Location of crime: Most domestic homicides occurred in the victim and accused's shared residence (45%; N=113), followed by the victim's home (18%; N=46), another home (7%; N=17), or the accused's residence (7%; N=16). Another 10 percent of cases (N=25) occurred at a public location (e.g., park, street, business, etc.), four percent occurred at a semi-public location (e.g., rooming house, hotel, inside a car). The remaining nine percent of victims were killed in an "other" (1%; N=3) or unknown location (8%; N=22).

OUTCOMES OF RRN DOMESTIC HOMICIDE CASES

Suicide: The accused died by suicide in almost one third of the RRN cases (30%; N=65) and attempted suicide in seven percent (N=16).²⁹ Of those who died by suicide, the majority were male (95%; N=62) and died by firearm (55%; N=36). Another six accused died of either stab wounds or arson (each at 5%; N=3). Four accused died by either poison or being hit by a car (3% each; N=2) and one died from other means (2%). The method was not reported for the remaining 28 percent of accused who died by suicide (N=18).

²⁸One case involved an accused killing three estranged intimate partners in the same day and another involved the serial killing of eight homosexual partners over the span of nine years.

²⁹Two accused were injured but it was unclear whether those injuries were self-inflicted.

RURAL, REMOTE, & NORTHERN DOMESTIC HOMICIDES

Among those who attempted suicide, most were male (94%; N=15) and, again, the most common method used to attempt suicide was shooting (25%; N=4), followed by stab wounds (19%; N=3), and a drug overdose (13%; N=2). Another 25 percent of accused attempted suicide by either arson, hanging, jumping from height, or an “other” method (each at 6%; N=1). The method used to attempt suicide was not reported for the remaining 18 percent of accused (N=3). Thus, the majority of suicides and attempted suicides in RRN locations involved the use of a firearm. Other researchers have found that lower levels of firearm ownership are consistent with lower levels of firearms’ suicides, while higher firearm ownership, such as in RRN regions, correlates with higher levels of firearms’ related suicide (Miller et al., 2006).

Criminal justice response: When charges were laid, most accused were charged with second degree murder (53%; N=81), followed by first degree (35%; N=53), and manslaughter (10%; N=16). The charge laid was not reported for two accused (1%), and one died before charges were laid (1%).

CHILDREN KILLED IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Child exposure to domestic violence is one of the most frequent forms of maltreatment in Canada and accounts for more than one-third of substantiated abuse cases annually (Fallon et al., 2013). Infants and toddlers are most at-risk for exposure to domestic violence. While there is considerable research on the negative impact of the exposure to domestic violence on children's development (Jaffe et al., 2011; Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, Macintyre-Smith & Jaffe, 2003), less is known about the risk of homicide faced by children living in these circumstances. When children are killed in the context of domestic violence, the context is most often a history of domestic violence and separation. In many cases, the motive appears to be an act of revenge to punish the adult victim for leaving the intimate relationship (Dawson, 2015; Jaffe et al., 2012).

According to the CDHPVP, child domestic homicide is defined as: (see David et al., 2017)

1. Child(ren) killed as a result of intervening during a violent episode between parents;³⁰
2. Child(ren) killed by a parent as revenge against the partner (e.g., partner ended relationship);
3. Child(ren) killed by a parent as part of a homicide-suicide in context of domestic violence;
4. Child(ren) killed by parent and there is a history of domestic violence (e.g., perpetrator of child homicide was a victim and/ or perpetrator of domestic violence);³¹
5. Child(ren) killed by a third party (e.g., older sibling) at the direction of a parent.

SECTION HIGHLIGHTS

- There were 74 children killed in the context of domestic violence, representing nine percent of all domestic homicide victims identified in the period from 2010-2019.
- Slightly more than half of all children killed within the context of domestic violence were female (53%). The age of child victims ranged from less than one year old to 15 years with an average age of six years.
- There were 54 accused identified in the 52 cases of domestic homicide involving children. The largest proportion of which were male (82%). The age of the accused ranged from 19 to 47 years, with an average age of 37.
- The majority of children killed were the biological child of the accused (70%), followed by stepchildren (24%), and the remaining were other kin of the accused.
- The largest proportion of child domestic homicides involved the death of two or more victims in a single incident (63%), perpetrated by a single accused (96%). When multiple victims were killed, cases most often involved the death of the accused's current or estranged intimate partner, who was identified as the primary victim (67%).
- When information was known, the largest proportion of child victims died as a result of firearms' injuries (24%), followed by arson (21%), stabbing (16%), or strangulation (12%). The remaining victims died of various other means.
- Over half of all child victims were killed in the residence they shared with the accused (53%). The remaining victims died in other private, public, or semi-public locations.
- Of the 54 individuals accused of killing a child within the context of domestic violence, half died by suicide (50%).

³⁰The category 'child' includes a person who is 17 years or younger. A 'parent' includes biological parent, step-parent, foster parent, and/or other caregivers (e.g., mother/father's new intimate partner, other family member acting in a caregiving role).

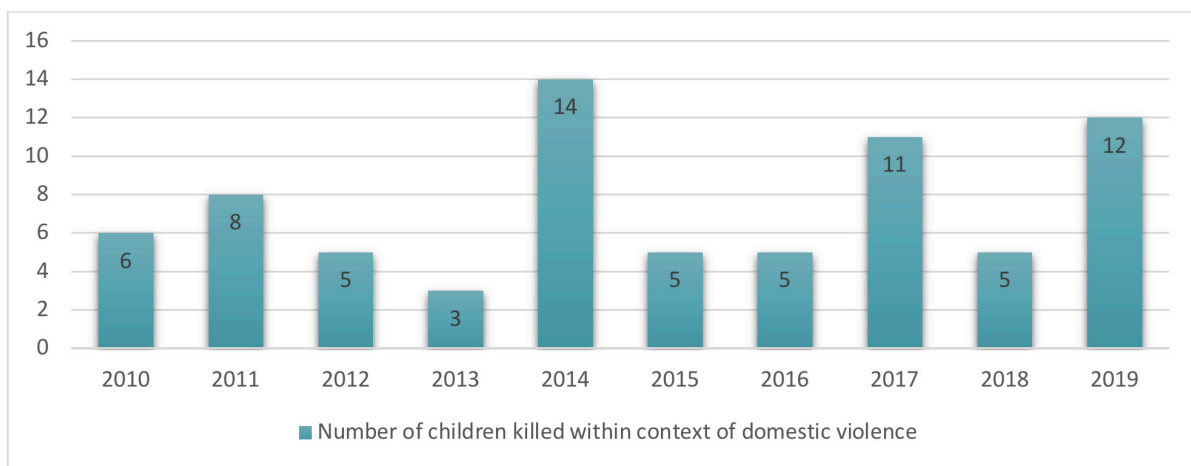
³¹'History of domestic violence' includes official records (e.g., police reports) or unofficial reports (e.g., by friends, family members) of violence occurring in the relationship. The key element of this definition is that domestic violence was involved in or a precursor to the child's death.

CHILDREN KILLED IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

PATTERNS OVER TIME AND BY GEOGRAPHY

Temporal distribution: As illustrated in Chart 7, an average of seven children were killed in the context of domestic violence each year. There were, however, fluctuations over time, that saw a larger number of children killed in 2014, 2017, and 2019. The lowest number was documented in 2013.

CHART 7. ANNUAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN KILLED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CANADA, 2010-2019 (N=74)



Geographic distribution: Contrary to previous sections, but aligned with documented trends in our last report (Dawson et al., 2018), Table 5 shows that most children killed in the context of domestic violence lived in Quebec (30%), followed by Ontario (26%), and Alberta (20%). The smallest proportion of child victims resided in Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island (1% each).

TABLE 5. GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN KILLED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, CANADA, 2010-2019 (N=74)

Jurisdiction	Total number of child victims	Percent of total child victims
Quebec	22	30
Ontario	19	26
Alberta	15	20
British Columbia	7	10
Saskatchewan	5	7
Nunavut	3	4
Newfoundland & Labrador	1	1
Nova Scotia	1	1
Prince Edward Island	1	1

CHILDREN KILLED IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF VICTIMS AND ACCUSED IN CHILD HOMICIDES

Gender of victim: Slightly more than one half of all children killed in the context of domestic violence were female (53%; N=39). This finding differs from our last report where 60 percent of all child victims were male (Dawson et al., 2018).

Age of victim: The age of child victims ranged from newborns to 15 years old with an average age of six years.

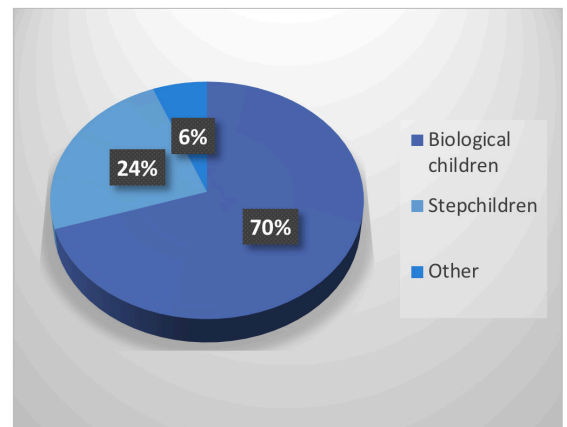
Gender of accused: There were 54 accused identified in the 52 cases of domestic homicide involving children. The largest proportion of accused was male (82%; N=44) and the remaining 19 percent were female (N=10).

Age of accused: The age of the accused ranged from 19 years to 47 years, with an average age of 37 years old. The largest proportion of accused were aged 35 to 44 (63%; N=20), followed by 25 to 34 years (25%; N=8), 45 to 54 (9%; N=3), and one accused was between the ages of 18 and 24 (3%).

VICTIM-ACCUSED RELATIONSHIP

As displayed in Figure 6, the majority of children killed were the biological child of the accused (70%; N=52), followed by stepchildren (24%; N=18), and other relationships (4%; N=3). The other category included two adopted children and the third child was the niece of the accused.

FIGURE 6. RELATIONSHIPS SHARED BETWEEN CHILD VICTIMS AND THEIR ACCUSED (N=74)



CHILDREN KILLED IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHILD HOMICIDE INCIDENT

Number of victims per case: The majority of domestic homicide cases involving the killing of a child involved the death of two or more victims in a single incident (63%; N=33). In cases that involved multiple victims, the largest proportion involved the killing of two victims (64%; N=21), followed by three victims (24%; N=8), and four victims (6%; N=2). One case involved the killing of five victims (3%), four of which were children, and the final case involved the deaths of eight victims (3%), two of which were children.

When multiple victims were killed, approximately two thirds of the cases involved the death of the accused's current or estranged intimate partner, who was identified as the primary victim (67%; N=22). The remaining one third of cases (33%; N=11) involved the accused targeting their biological child as the primary victim. It follows, then, that more than two-thirds of all multiple victim homicides involving at least one child could be classified as a familicide (70%; N=23 cases).

Aside from the primary victim in cases of multiple victims, the largest proportion of collateral or secondary victims was the biological child of the accused (48%; N=26), followed by their step- or adopted children (31%; N=17), and victims who shared an 'other' relationship with the accused (20%; N=11). Within this group, the largest proportion were family members of the primary victim (55%; N=6), strangers (27%; N=3), and in the remaining two cases one accused killed his parent (9%) and another killed the primary victim's new intimate partner (9%).

Number of accused per case: Given that the majority of child domestic homicides involved multiple victims, 54 individuals were accused of perpetrating the 74 child homicides. The majority of cases involved a single accused (96%; N=50), and two cases involved two accused (4%).

Method: When this information was made public (78%; N=58), most children were killed by firearms (24%; N=14), followed by arson (21%; N=12), stabbing (16%; N=9), strangulation (12%; N=7), smothering (7%; N=4), drowning (5%; N=3), being hit by a car (5%; N=3), and beating deaths (5%; N=3). The remaining five percent of child victims died by other means (N=3).

Weapon used: When this information was reported (77%; N=57), a weapon was used in almost one half of all domestic homicides (47%; N=27). The most common type of weapon was a knife (26%; N=7), followed by firearms (15% long guns, 7% handguns), or a vehicle (11%; N=3), with a smaller proportion involving the use of another type of weapon (7%; N=2) or the use of multiple weapons (4%; N=1). The weapon used was unknown for the remaining 30 percent of victims (N=8), which can be attributed largely to the type of firearm not being reported in public documents.

Witnesses: Aligned with trends reported in previous sections and our last report (Dawson et al., 2018), there were no witnesses present for the majority of children killed within the context of domestic violence (66%; N=49). When witnesses were present (N=13), most involved the biological child of the accused (38%; N=5), a family member of both the victim and accused (31%; N=4), or a family member of the victim (8%; N=1). The killing of three children was witnessed by third parties (23%). This information was not reported for 16 percent of children killed (N=12).

Location of crime: Given that most children were killed by a biological parent, the largest proportion died in a private location (82%). Of which, over half were killed in the residence they shared with the accused (53%; N=39), in the home they shared with another caregiver (15% N=11), the accused's residence (12%; N=9), another residence (1%; N=1), or a short-term hotel accommodation (1%; N=1). A smaller proportion (15%; N=11) were killed in a public/semi-public location (i.e., street, car, park). This information was not reported for the remaining three percent of victims (N=2).

CHILDREN KILLED IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

OUTCOMES OF CASES INVOLVING CHILD DOMESTIC HOMICIDE

Suicide: Of the 54 individuals accused of killing a child in the context of domestic violence, one half died by suicide (50%; N=27) and 13 percent attempted suicide (N=7).³² Among those who died suicide, most were male (93%; N=25) and often died by shooting (30%; N=8), followed by arson (15%; N=4), hanging (7%; N=2), jumping from height (7%; N=2), being hit by a car (7%; N=2) and one accused died of stab wounds (4%). The suicide method used was not reported for the remaining seven accused (26%). Among the accused who attempted suicide, slightly more than one half were male (57%; N=4) and an equal proportion attempted suicide by stabbing (29%; N=2) or drug overdose (29%; N=2). The remaining three accused attempted suicide with arson, jumping from height, or another method (14% each).

Criminal justice response: No charges were laid for one half of all accused because they died by suicide (50%; N=27). When charges were laid, the largest proportion of accused was charged with second degree murder (52%; N=11), followed by manslaughter (29%; N=6), and four accused were charged with first degree murder (19%). The charge laid was not specified for the remaining 29 percent of accused (N=6).

³²One accused was injured, but it was not clear whether those injuries were self-inflicted.

SUMMARY

Domestic violence and domestic homicides are major social, criminal, and public health issues that affect thousands of Canadians. Although both men and women are affected, the World Health Organization recognizes that women bear the greatest burden given they represent the majority of cases. This reinforces the fact that domestic violence and homicide is fundamentally a gender-based problem. There is also increasing evidence that thousands of children are exposed to domestic violence. From our review, children may also become homicide victims or witness horrific violence and a traumatic aftermath. One death is one too many. But we've documented that it is much more than one death – it is 815 deaths. That is 815 lives lost to domestic homicides from 2010-2019 in Canada. This is an overwhelming and staggering statistic that is at risk of becoming much more given the impacts of COVID-19, particularly on the lives of women and children already living with domestic violence.

However, as noted above, we were working with limited information extracted from court decisions and media reports. This raises challenges in terms of consistency, thoroughness, and accuracy of data for some of the cases. Many cases have missing information. Other cases have extensive information documented by the court's judicial findings of facts and reasons for sentencing. Some groups of victims had much less information available than other groups of victims.

Our research has a focus on four vulnerable populations who appear to be at greater risk of domestic homicide due to historical oppression and/or lack of access to resources because of isolation through factors such as geography, language, culture, age and poverty. We prioritized four populations as a first step: (1) Indigenous populations; (2) immigrant and refugee populations; (3) rural, remote, and northern populations; and (4) children killed in the context of domestic violence. Each of these populations experience factors that enhance their vulnerability to domestic violence and homicide and exacerbate the negative mental and physical health consequences of violence. These groups face greater challenges in finding services and safety.

Our findings suggest that there are regions in Canada that reflect a higher rate of domestic homicides and vulnerable groups that are disproportionately affected. There are implications for increased awareness about the extent of the problem and needed solutions related to enhanced professional training and collaboration. In our other publications, we have discussed the importance of moving beyond a one-size fits all approach to understanding and addressing domestic violence and homicide (Jeffrey et al, 2018). The intervention and prevention strategies that are developed will need to recognize the combination of individual, relational, community, and societal factors that contribute to the risk for victims and their children.

However, as underscored by this research, we continue to emphasize individual-level risk factors but fail to recognize that individuals possess more than a single identity as shown, for example, by the overlap across the four populations examined in this project. However, data on these identities is often difficult to capture accurately and consistently, meaning that the way in which combined identities and related oppressions and discrimination compound marginalization and risk of violence is not captured. As a result, the intersections of these identities and their impacts on the lives of those who are experiencing violence is also not considered carefully or incorporated well into our community and societal responses to domestic violence. Furthermore, this emphasis on individual-level factors also precludes an examination of the community and societal level contributors which provide the larger context within which individual experience violence. With attention to these broader contributors, we cannot progress further with violence prevention given that it is not possible to respond to individuals without also responding to the communities within which they live and the related societal norms, beliefs and attitudes.

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