

# Report shows tragic patterns in domestic homicides

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Credit: Paul Mayne//Western News

A new report from the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations (CDHPIVP) is a painful reminder that domestic violence is a major social, criminal and public health issue

that affects thousands of Canadians every day.

The report, titled "One is Too Many: Trends and Patterns in Domestic Homicides in Canada 2010-2015," is based on work from a Social Science and Humanities Research Council grant developed jointly by Myrna Dawson, Director of University of Guelph's Centre for the Study of Social and Legal Responses to Violence, and Peter Jaffe, Academic Director of Western University's Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women & Children (CREVAWC).

It explores hundreds of domestic homicides using public-records information available from court decisions and media reports.

Specifically, the new report focuses on four vulnerable populations at greater risk of domestic [homicide](#) due to historical oppression and/or lack of access to resources because of isolation through various factors such as geography, language, culture, age and poverty. They are:

- Indigenous populations;
- immigrant and refugee populations;
- rural, remote, and northern populations; and
- children killed in the context of domestic violence.

"Each of these populations experience factors that greatly enhance their vulnerability to domestic violence and homicide and exacerbate the negative mental and physical health consequences of violence," said Dawson, who serves as CDHPIVP Co-Director. "These groups face greater challenges in finding services and safety."

Key statistics and findings from the report include:

Demographics of victims and accused:

- From 2010-2015 in Canada, there were 418 cases of domestic homicide involving 476 victims. There were 427 adult victims (90 per cent) and 49 victims aged 17 and younger (10 per cent).
- Women comprised 79 percent of the adult victims and men were 21 percent of adult victims. Among child victims, females represented 53 per cent of the victims; males, 47 percent.
- The majority of adult victims were 25 to 34 years of age (28 per cent). The average age was 39 years. Among child victims, ages ranged from less than one year to 13 years old, with an average age of six years.
- 86 per cent of the accused people in domestic homicide were male (86%). Of all the accused, 21 per cent died by suicide and another seven per cent attempted suicide following the homicide.
- The majority of the accused were aged 25 to 34 years (25 per cent) with an average age of 40 years.
- There were 253 domestic homicide victims (53%) that were identified as belonging to one or more of the four populations being focused on in the CDHPVIP, including Indigenous, immigrant/refugee, and rural, remote and northern populations as well as children killed in the context of [domestic violence](#).

#### Relationship between victim and accused:

- 61 per cent of victims were in a current intimate relationship with the accused and 26 per cent were separated or estranged.
- Among cases in which victim and accused were in a current relationship, 21 per cent had evidence that separation was imminent or pending.
- Thirty-seven children were killed within the context of the domestic homicide; 70 per cent were biological children of the victim and/or accused and 24 percent involved stepchildren.
- In the 418 cases, 13 per cent involved the homicide of third parties, such as family members, neighbours, new partners, or

other bystanders.

#### Crimes and charges:

- When information was known, most victims died as a result of stabbing (38%), following by shooting (24%), strangulation (11%) or beating (11%).
- 44 per cent of victims were killed in the home they shared with the accused, 19 per cent in their own home and 10 per cent in the home of the accused
- Second-degree murder was the most common initial charge laid (50%) followed by first degree murder charges (37%), manslaughter charges (7%), 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).

Future CDHPIVP reports will help identify and inform priorities for future practice, policy, and research while the overall mission of CDHPIVP is to develop and implement more nuanced and appropriate population-specific, culturally-informed practices and policies.

"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 promote safety planning," said Jaffe, who also serves as CDHPIVP Co-Director. "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."

**More information:** One is Too Many: Trends and Patterns in Domestic Homicides in Canada 2010-2015: [cdhpi.ca/sites/cdhpi.ca/files/...\\_RTDEC2\\_DEC\\_FINAL.pdf](http://cdhpi.ca/sites/cdhpi.ca/files/..._RTDEC2_DEC_FINAL.pdf)

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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