

Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Conference,
October 19, 2017

Addressing Family Violence Directed at Men as One of the Ways for Prevention of Domestic Homicide in Canada

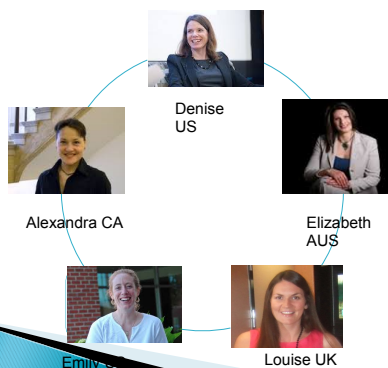
Dr. Alexandra Lysova
School of Criminology
Simon Fraser University
alysova@sfu.ca

In collaboration with:
Emeka Dim, MA, University of Saskatchewan

Why male victims? My background

- ▶ 10 years of research on violence against women and children in Russia
- ▶ Teaching & advocacy work in Russia
- ▶ Slow realization not to ignore male victims
 - Studies suggested complex interaction
 - Average life expectancy for men in Russia was 13 years lower than that for women in the 1990s and early 2000s; now difference is about 10 years
 - High mortality rate of men due to violence and alcohol

Highlighting Invisible Men (HIM): An International Domestic Abuse Network



Main Assumptions/Argument

- ▶ Violence against women and children continues to be a serious social problem (!)
- ▶ Violence against men is a part of the FV problem
 - Focus on the interaction and interdependency;
 - Both partners as active agents;
 - FV/PV by one partner cannot be understood in isolation
- ▶ Addressing FV directed at men is *one of* the ways for prevention of domestic homicide against *both men and women*

In this workshop...

- ▶ Why violence against *men*?
- ▶ Police-reported data:
 - Victims of domestic homicide and major assault
- ▶ Victimization survey & focus groups data:
 - Physical & sexual violence; Psychological violence
 - Context of PV against men
- ▶ Prevention of domestic homicide by addressing male victimisation

Why *male* victims of PV?

- ▶ Ignored and under-researched area
 - Historical focus on female victims of PV
 - Mainstream perspective “violence against women”
 - Lack of studies that would give voice to men
- ▶ Services for male victims are limited and almost no evaluations
- ▶ *Any* violence is wrong and dangerous
 - Including female violence directed at men

What do we know about male victims of PV/DV? Any misconceptions?



Cases of VAM in Canadian Media



“As a man, we’re taught never hit back, so you just sit there like a punching bag and you take it, and it’s shameful for me to admit, shameful for me to admit as a cop”

- “Cycle of violence”
- Severe physical violence
- Controlling behaviour
- Slow realization of what happened to him was violence

Cases of VAM in Canadian Media

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

RELATIONSHIPS

'Denied and dismissed'



DAVID WOODHEAD/THE GLOBE AND MAIL
As men today face a similar battle women did long before spousal abuse was recognized, the idea of a silent population of stigmatized, abused husbands remains a fraught proposition, Zena Bielecki writes

Male victims of domestic abuse struggle against stigma

Former Joy Division bassist Peter Hook shares how he was abused by his ex-wife:

"I was an abused husband and it's embarrassing, and you feel ashamed, and you can't tell anyone".

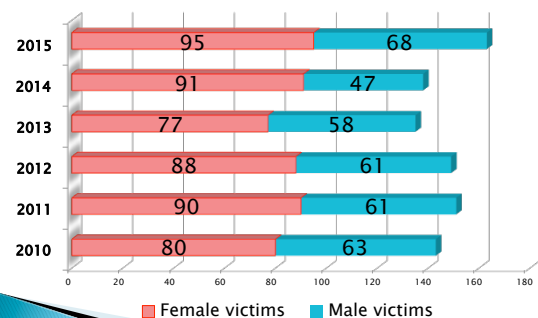
Official data on male victims in Canada

» Police-reported data on homicide, attempted homicide and major assaults

Police-reported data on family-related homicide

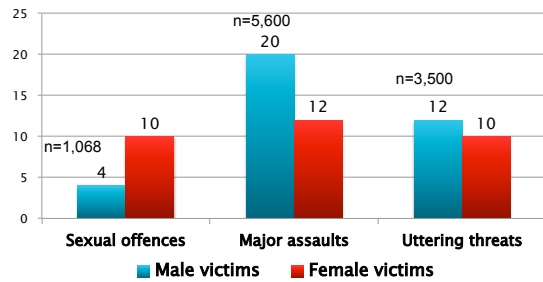
» Number of homicides, in 2015

41% of those killed in *family* between 2010 and 2015 are men, *n*



Juristat, 2017: 46

Victims of police-reported FV, by type of offence, 2015, %

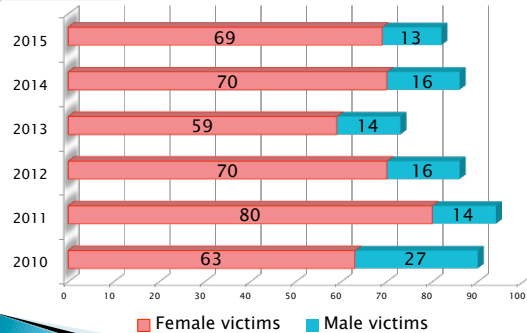


Juristat, 2017: 41

Victims of police-reported Intimate Partner Violence

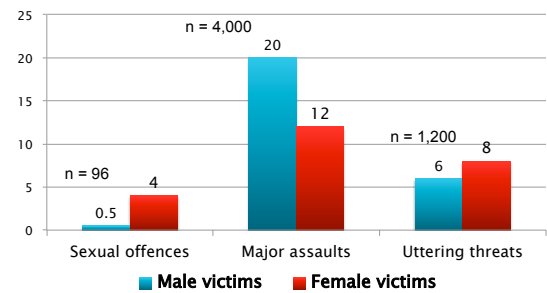


About 20% of those killed by a *partner* in 2010–2015 are men, *n*



Juristat, 2017: 54

Victims of police-reported PV, by type of offence, 2015, %



Percent change of rate of victims of PV for selected offences, 2010–2015

Male victims

Female victims

Total number:

–0.7%	–9%
▶ Attempted murder:	–9%
+19%	–9%
▶ Physical assault:	–10%
–0.8%	–10%
▶ Sexual assault:	+15%
+39%	

Caution: Based on small numbers

Juristat, 2017, FV in Canada 2015: 53

Police-reported data on FV/PV : Main Findings

- ▶ 20% to 40% of victims of partner/family-related homicides are men;
- ▶ FV/PV is a gendered phenomenon;
- ▶ The cases of the most severe FV/PV offences against men become known to the police and reported in the annual police statistics;
- ▶ Increased rates of partner attempted murder and sexual assault among male victims since 2010

Police-reported data on FV/PV: What is missing?

- ▶ The Dark Figure of Crime:
 - 70% of PV is not reported to the police (GSS 2014)
- ▶ Lack of context/ other types of abuse/violent dynamics



Other Sources of Data: My Research

- ▶ The General Social Survey on Victimization (GSS 2014)
 - Research Data Centre Project at SFU
- ▶ International focus groups in 4 countries
 - 9 men in Canada

Rationale and Benefits

- ▶ Types and context of violence
- ▶ Prior domestic violence is the major risk factor for family/partner homicide

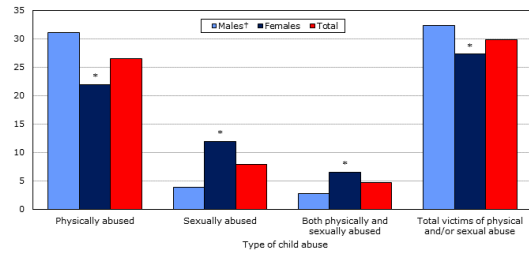
General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimisation – 2014 with the excerpts from the focus groups



Experience of Child Abuse

Chart 1.1
Self-reported childhood physical and/or sexual abuse, Canada, 2014

percent of Canadians
aged 15 and older



* significantly different from reference group ($p < 0.05$)

† reference group

Note: Data for respondents who answered 'don't know' or 'refuse' are not shown, but are included in percent calculations.

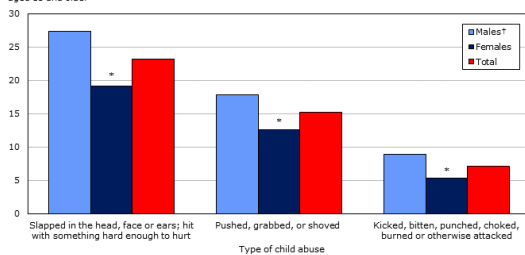
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey.

Juristat, 2017: 6

Types of Physical Child Abuse

Chart 1.3
Types of self-reported childhood physical abuse, Canada, 2014

percent of Canadians
aged 15 and older



* significantly different from reference group ($p < 0.05$)

† reference group

Note: Data for respondents who answered 'don't know' or 'refuse' are not shown, but are included in percent calculations.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey.

Juristat, 2017: 8

Spousal Violence and Child Abuse

Text box 5 chart
Victims of self-reported spousal violence, by history of childhood physical and sexual abuse, 2014

percent of spousal
violence victims



* significantly different from reference category ($p < 0.05$)

† Reference category.

Note: Includes legally married, common-law, same-sex, separated and divorced spouses who reported having experienced violence within the 5-year period preceding the survey. Data for the territories will be published at a later date.

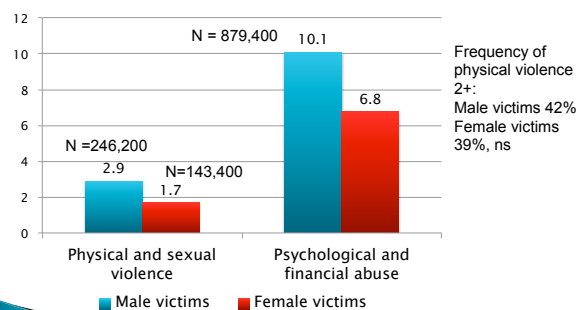
Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2014.

Juristat, 2016: 13

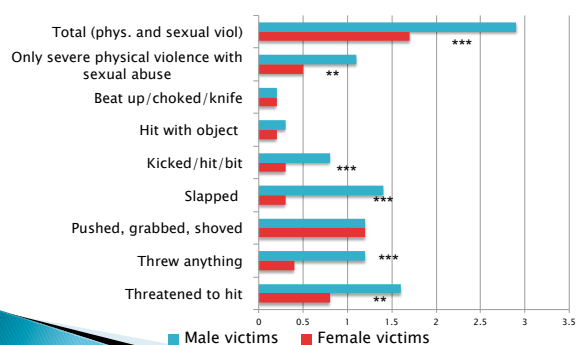
Violence in Heterosexual Current Relationships

» GSS-2014
RDC Project

Victims of self-reported partner violence, by sex and type, %



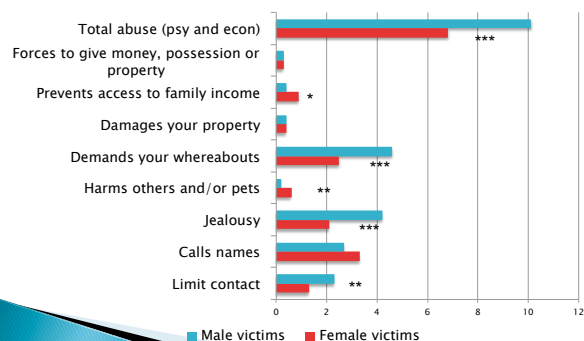
Victims of Physical Violence in Heterosexual Current Relationships, by sex



Focus Groups – Physical Violence

- ▶ Michael:
 - ...I mean she had hit me, slapped me, kicked me, punched me, numerous times....and she was kicking me in the chest and kicking me between the legs and punching me in the face
 - ...and eventually I had a laceration on my eye, I also had a concussion and numerous bruises and scratches....
 - She knocked me unconscious with a wine bottle and I was left unconscious on the ground and she was trying to light matches on my bed....
- ▶ John:
 - I had bruises all over my ribs and in the back
- ▶ Dave:
 - I was pushed down the stairs numerous times

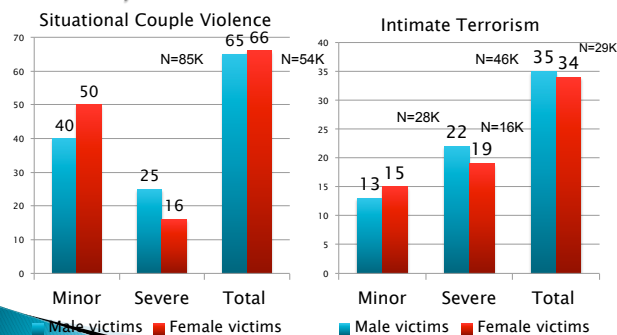
Victims of Emotional and Financial Abuse in heterosexual current rel.



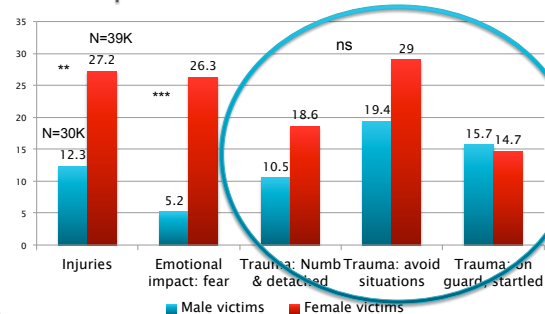
Focus Groups: Psychological Abuse

- ▶ Psychological abuse
 - ...we had an argument one time, and she came over to my apartment and ...she starts running all over my flat, trying to destroy everything...
- ▶ Controlling behaviour
 - ...this was a long systematic process of alienating me from the people I cared about
- ▶ Threatened to kill children
 - The night she took the pills she told me "I'm going to walk to the river with your son and kill him"
- ▶ Legal/Administrative Aggression
 - I felt blackmail by her, because she was always saying when I started to realize that I was being abused, "what are you going to do", "I am the woman in the case, you are the perpetrator, no matter what"

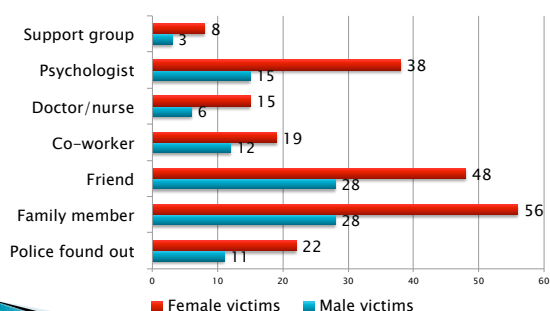
Types of PV by sex and severity of abuse, %



Long- and Short-term Consequences of Partner Violence



Formal supports used by victims of self-reported PV, %



Why male victims did not contact the police – GSS-2014

1. Private matter (87%)
2. Minor crime (81%)
3. No one was harmed (80%)
4. No harm was intended (74%)
5. *Police would not consider it as important incident (34%)*
6. Did not want to get your spouse in trouble with the law (32%)
7. *Hassle dealing with the police (31%)*
8. Did not want others to find out (23%)

Why male victims did not contact the police & services (cont.)

9. *Police would not have been efficient or effective (17%)*
10. Shame or dishonour to the family (15%)
11. *Fear/hassle of court process (12%)*
12. *Police would be biased (10%)*
13. *Partner wouldn't be convicted/punished (8%)*
14. There was a lack of evidence (5%)

Focus Groups – Reporting Violence

- ▶ Victimless stance
 - John: "...the word victim is an awful word ...When you read a pamphlet and go, oh, yeah, am I a victim?.... You will run away from it"
 - Michael: "The victim narrative will never allow you to heal, that's the thing you know"
- ▶ Emphasis on personal responsibility
 - "...And I was always the peace maker, keeping it altogether, trying to make everything together making things seem normal and pretty"

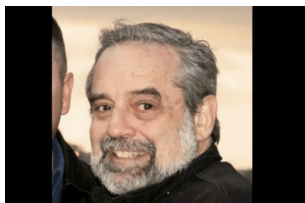
Focus Groups – CJS responses

- ▶ Lack of service provision
 - Dave: "I've been to lots of counsellors and stuff like that and I never had the help that I really needed"
 - Michael: "...I was hoping that the court would give me some sort of counselling, or just something, or somebody to talk to. And the court didn't give me anything at all."
- ▶ Professionals' lack of awareness
 - "The police came and they took her side immediately ... and they were really mean to me"
 - "I call the police and I said "look you have to do something now". I already had an restraining order on her before and she was trying to break the restraining order and the police just told me, "Oh man up, or who are you? You are so pathetic that you cannot protect yourself against a girl?"

Services for male victims of PV/DV in Canada

» Two stories: failure and success

Earl Silverman Dead: Owner Of Shelter For Male Victims Of Domestic Abuse (2013)



Founder of the Canada's first shelter for male victims of DV, out of his own pocket

In a suicide note appears to blame the Canadian government for not paying enough attention to male victims of DV

Was abused by his wife and left her. Silverman: *"There were a lot for women, and the only programs for men were for anger management. As a victim, I was re-victimized by having these services telling me that I wasn't a victim, but I was a perpetrator."*

Efforts to Help Male Victims in Canada



Are you a man who has experienced domestic abuse or other forms of trauma? Now there's support for you.

Individual counselling - Group support
Legal services - Support for fathers and children
If you're in danger, call us for access to temporary shelter as well as bedding, clothing, formal and winter wear, and products for children

Canadian Centre for Men and Families
101 Leslie Street, 4th floor
Toronto, Ontario M4M 1B4
416-593-8888
www.ccmf.ca

Canadian Centre for Men and Families – the only support group for male abuse victims in the GTA

Referrals from Toronto Police, Victim Services of Toronto, CMHA, Family Services, the John Howard Society, as well as hospitals, settlement agencies and homeless shelters

Authorized by Legal Aid Ontario to provide legal aid certificates to male victims of DV

The Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness, a major national anti-abuse organization

Issues in the directions for policy on men's victimisation

- ▶ Too few to be concerned about?
 - Both police-reported and self-reported data suggest it's not the case
 - Any violence is dangerous and can be unpredictable in consequences
 - Women's initial violence can be a risk factor not only for men's but also for their own victimisation

Issues in the directions for policy on men's victimisation (cont.)

- ▶ Does acknowledging male victimisation endanger the gendered nature of PV and policy toward equality established by feminists?
 - NO!
 - Gendered histories of male victims are similar and also different from women
 - Address men's need for support and legal services without dismantling vital support for female victims
 - Next – more specific practical questions how to do it

Specific policies on male victims of PV/DV

- ▶ Breaking the silence of “the forbidden narrative” (Brooks et al., 2017)
- ▶ Increase disclosure about victimisation
 - Avoid direct questions about violence against them
 - Or safe place to express their stories honestly
 - Men do not define themselves as victims
- ▶ Detect and dismantle stereotypes about violence, female aggression and male victims

Discussion Questions

- ▶ What are the ways to *increase awareness* and *dispel myths/stereotypes* about male victims of DV in Canada?
- ▶ How to help male victims deal with the *reluctance and masculine stereotypes* of DV that prevent them from seeking help?
- ▶ How can we *better serve* male victims in Canada in the context of existing services for DV victims?
 - Police training
 - Address limitations of mandatory laws and “primary aggressor” policies

Thank you! Dr. Alexandra Lysova
alysova@sfu.ca

Bibliography

- ▶ Brooks, C., Martin, S., Broda, L., & Poudrier, J. (2017). "How Many Silences Are There?" Men's Experience of Victimization in Intimate Partner Relationships. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 0886260517719905.
- ▶ Juristat (2016). *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2014*. Catalogue 85-002-X.
- ▶ Juristat (2017). *Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2015*. Catalogue 85-002-X.