

## Violence in the Lives of Girls

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### Abstract

The World Health Organization defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community that either results in or has a higher likelihood of injury, death, psychological harm, or «maldevelopment/deprivation» (Krug, Dahlberg, & Mercy, 2002, p. 5). This definition encompasses specific types of violence including family violence, peer violence, dating violence, school-based violence and community violence. Although there is an emerging body of research on gender-based violence, there are currently no comprehensive studies in Canada conducted at a national level that focus exclusively on the topic of girls’ victimization experiences. Further, although the literature includes information regarding how specific characteristics of youth such as gender, social class, disability status, sexual orientation, race, culture and ethnicity may be related to a particular type of violence victimization, there is minimal information available that investigates how the intersection of a number of characteristics increases the risk of violence for young women.

The research objectives are:

1. to investigate the occurrence, nature, and frequency of violence experienced by a nationally representative sample of youth;
2. to describe the assessment of youths’ perceptions of the degree to which their membership in particular social categories (gender, sexual orientation, social class, ability/disability, culture, race, and ethnicity) is related to the violence they experience;
3. to compare intersecting sites of violence for youth in different regions of Canada, including different provinces, urban and rural regions and northern and southern regions.

This study is grounded within two theoretical frameworks: the ecological perspective and the cognitive theory. As the intent of this study is to document and compare the rates of violence victimization of particular groups from a pan-Canadian perspective, 7 regional sites have been identified. They are: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. Participants will consist of 1400 male and female youth, 12 to 19 years of age. The rationale for this age cohort is that it will provide the researchers with access to the middle school population, and increase the likelihood of participants’ having a basic literacy level. Further, this age range is important because recent evidence suggests that violence is increasing in younger adolescents (Beyer & Ogletree, 1998; (Burcky, Reuterman, & Kopsky, 1988). Youth will be sampled from two different types of organizations: schools and community youth programs. In order to understand the experiences of girls, it is important to understand the experiences of boys. Therefore, both boys and girls will be sampled to provide a comparison with the nature and differing effects of the violence to which they are each exposed. Approximately 200 youth from each of the seven participating regions will be recruited.