



Who is cyberbullying?

Victim and perpetrator characteristics as reported by victims

Introduction

Using data from the *2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS)*, this product primarily explores the **prevalence of cyberbullying** among **young adults (aged 18 to 29)**, as **reported by victims**. It includes **victim and perpetrator¹ data** organized by **victim-perceived** gender, sexual identity, and race characteristics. The product also includes a short section on **police-reported accused data** from the *2022 Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (UCR)*.

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¹ The *Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS)* uses the term "offender" instead of "perpetrator." Offender characteristics in the SSPPS are reported by victims and have not necessarily been convicted of a cyberbullying offence by a court. For this reason, this product uses "perpetrator" instead when referencing SSPPS data. [Back to the text](#).

Aussi disponible en français sous le titre : Qui peut être un cyberintimidateur ? Caractéristiques de la victime et de l'agresseur selon les victimes.

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Key terms

Cyberbullyingⁱ

Any **behaviour performed through electronic or digital media** by people or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages **intended to inflict harm or discomfort** to others.ⁱⁱ



Perpetrator

In the context of cyberbullying, a **perpetrator** is a person who performs single or multiple acts of **inappropriate online behaviour** to inflict harm or discomfort on another person.



Victim

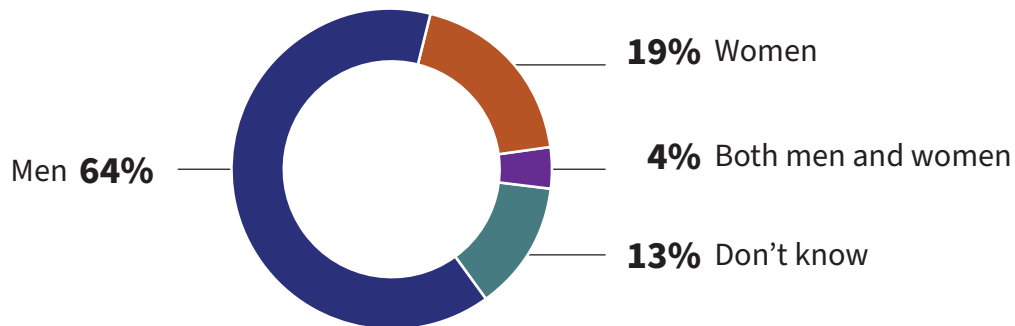
In the context of cyberbullying, a **victim** is a person who has **suffered physical or emotional harm, property damage, or economic loss** as a result of being cyberbullied.ⁱⁱⁱ



Findings²

According to victims, almost two-thirds of their cyberbullying perpetrators were men.

Figure 1: Gender of perpetrator in incidents of online inappropriate behaviours against young adults, 2018^{iv}



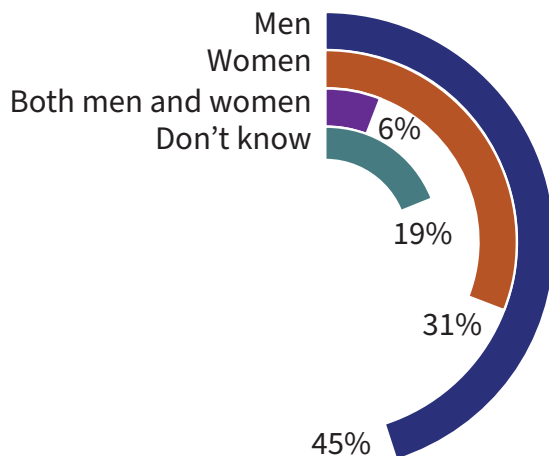
Women were more likely to report being cyberbullied by men (72.7% versus 13.1% by women). Men were also more likely to report being cyberbullied by men (44.8% versus 30.7% by women).

The **proportion of women who cyberbullied men (30.7%) was higher** than those who cyberbullied other women (13.1%).

Figure 2: Gender of victim and perpetrator in incidents of online inappropriate behaviours against young adults, 2018^v

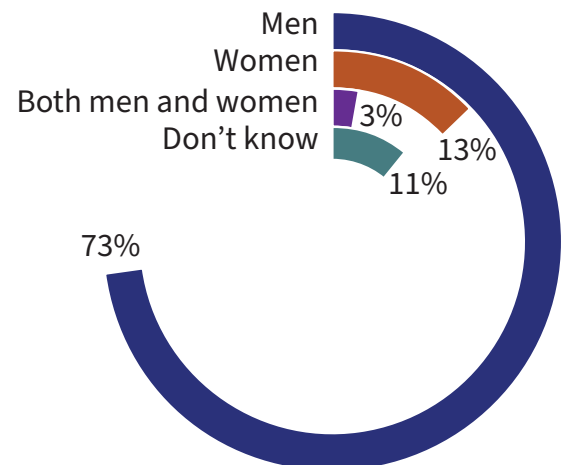
Gender of the victim: Men

Gender of Perpetrator



Gender of the victim: Women

Gender of Perpetrator

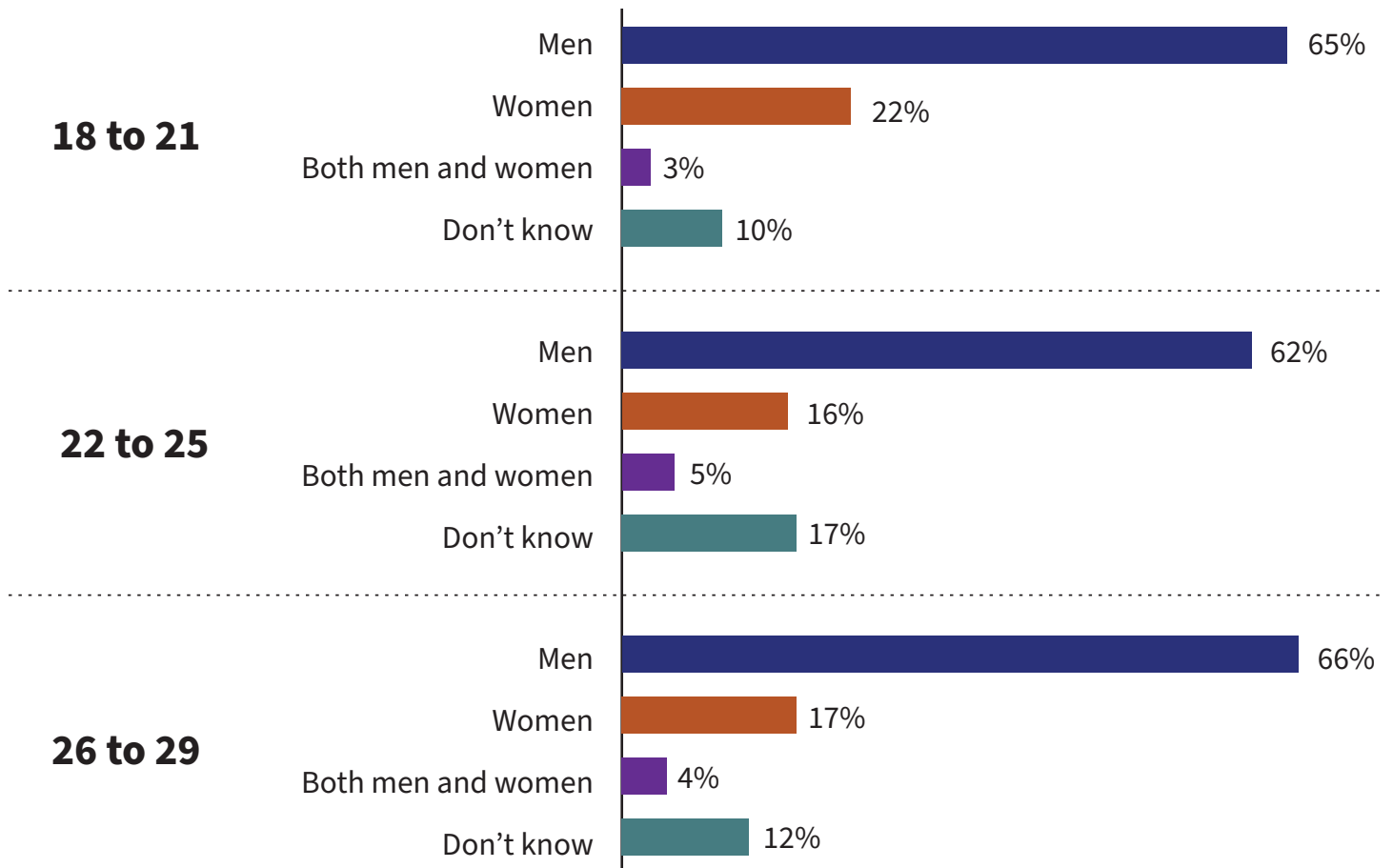


² The data described below are descriptive, meaning that no statistical tests were conducted. All interpretations are based on the percentages listed. [Back to the text.](#)

Across all age groups, victims reported that the majority of those who cyberbullied them were men.

The data suggest that **perpetrators who are men were more likely to target victims across all age groups.** By contrast, **perpetrators who are women, were more likely to target victims aged 18 to 21.**

Figure 3: Age of victim and gender of perpetrator in incidents of online inappropriate behaviours, 2018^{vi}



Victims who are members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community were more likely to report that they were cyberbullied by men compared to non-2SLGBTQIA+ victims.

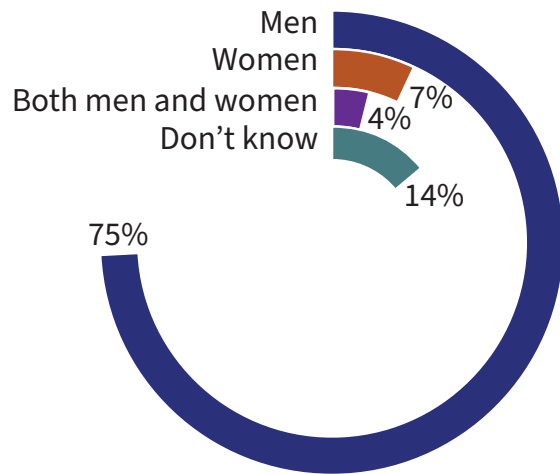
The data also suggest that **perpetrators who are women were less likely to target members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.**

Figure 4: Sexual identity of the victim and gender of perpetrator in incidents of online inappropriate behaviours against young adults, 2018^{vii}

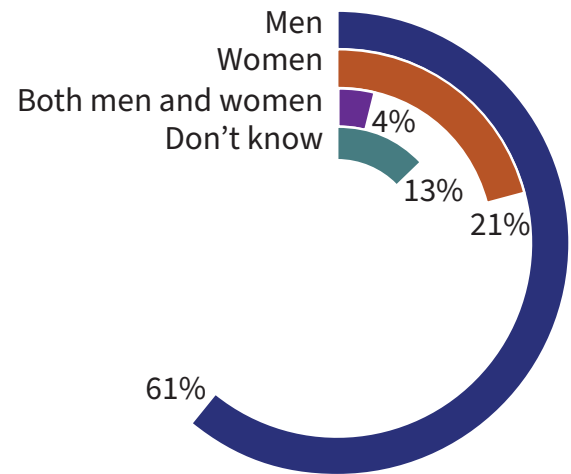
2SLGBTQIA+

Non-2SLGBTQIA+

Gender of Perpetrator

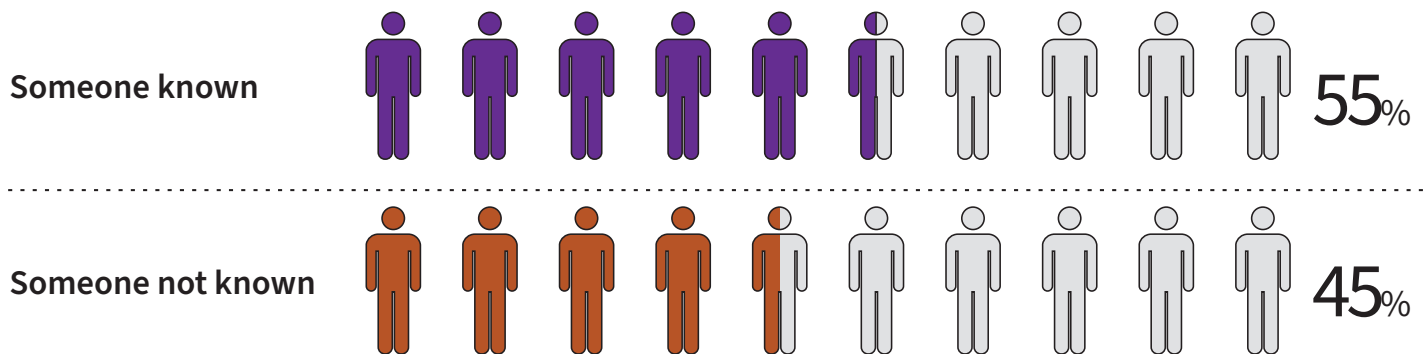


Gender of Perpetrator



Over half of cyberbullying victims reported that their perpetrator was someone known to them.

Figure 5: Victim's relationship to perpetrator in incidents of online inappropriate behaviours against young adults, 2018^{viii}

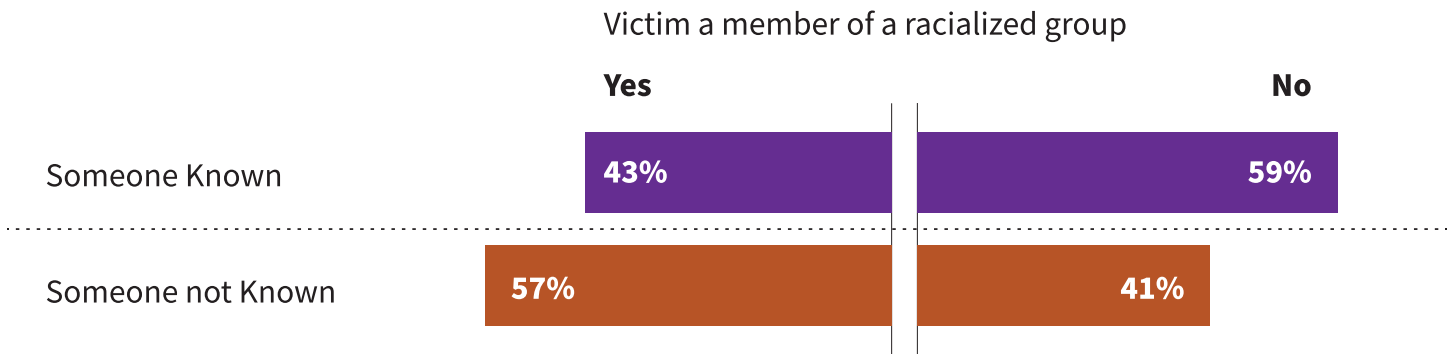


Someone known includes friends, neighbours, acquaintances, teachers, professors, managers, co-workers, classmates, family members, current or former spouses, common-law partners or dating partners.

Someone not known includes strangers or persons known by sight only.

However, victims who are members of a racialized group were more likely to be cyberbullied by someone they did not know.

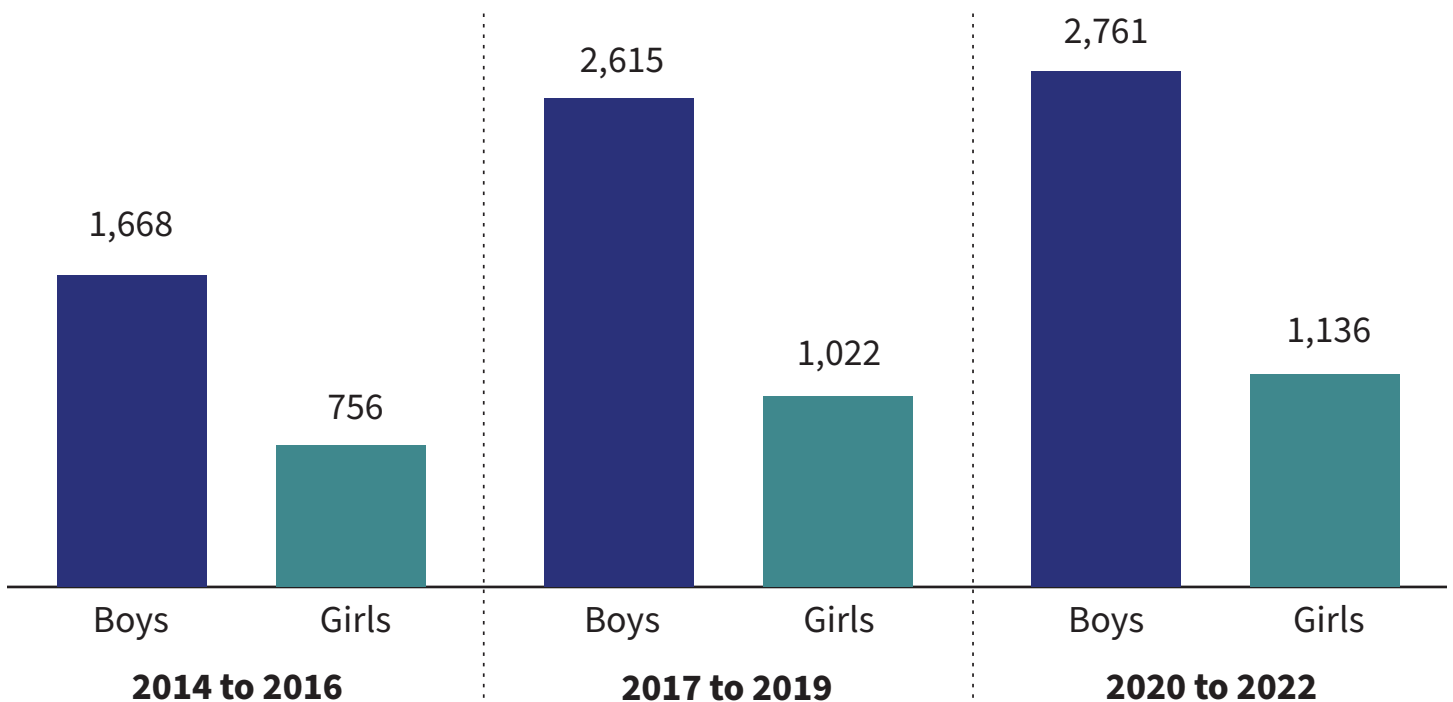
Figure 6: Racialized victim's relationship to perpetrator in incidents of online inappropriate behaviours against young adults, 2018^x



Spotlight: Findings from the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey^x

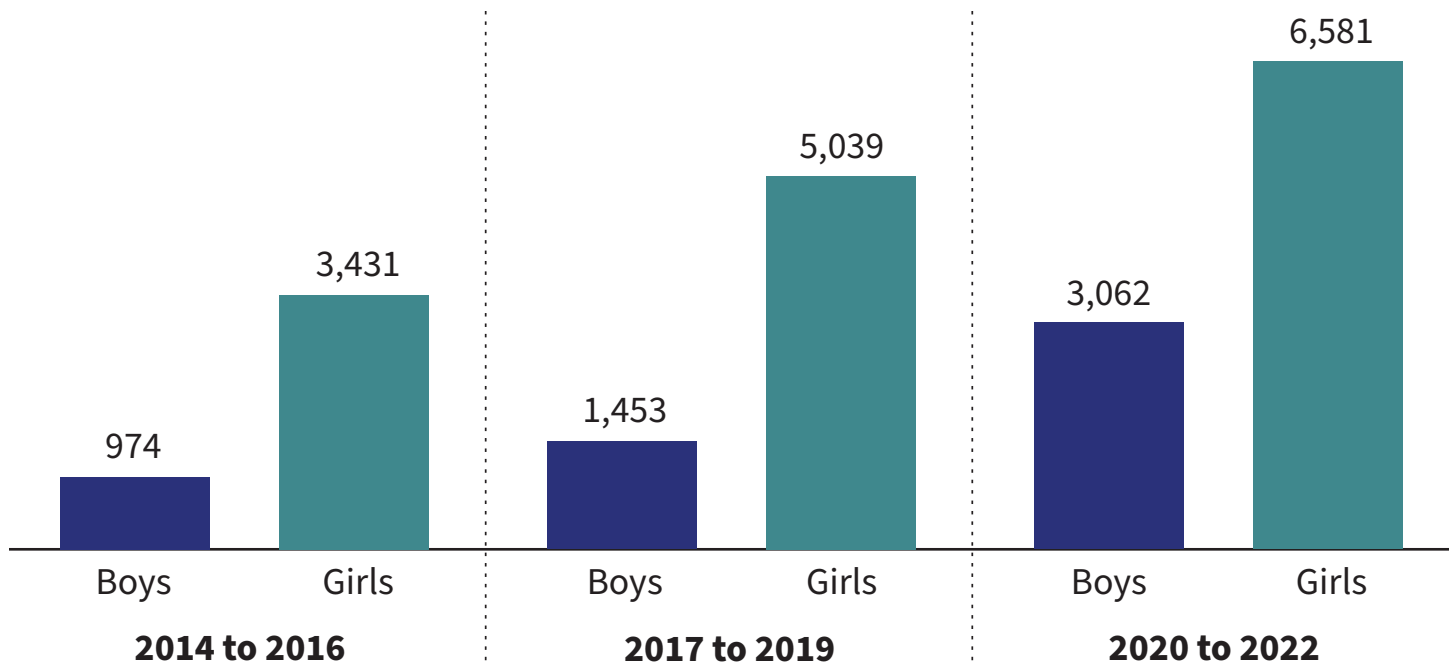
Overall, the number of boys and girls accused of police-reported cybercrime was greatest between 2020 to 2022 compared to previous years.

Figure 7. Youth aged 12 to 17 accused in police-reported cybercrime incidents, by gender, and number of cyber-related violations, Canada, 2014 to 2022



Although girls continue to experience more police-reported violent cybercrime incidents than boys, the number of crimes against boys is also steadily increasing.

Figure 8. Youth victims aged 12 to 17 in police-reported violent cybercrime incidents, by gender, and number of cyber-related violations, Canada, 2014 to 2022



The Bottom Line

These data show that, among young adults surveyed, the **majority of cyberbullying perpetrators were men**. These data also reveal that **experiences of cyberbullying for victims vary when comparing characteristics** such as **gender, sexual identity, race, and relationship to the perpetrator**. More research on cyberbullying and victim characteristics is needed to better understand the relationship between victim and perpetrator characteristics and experiences of cyberbullying for young adults.

References

- ⁱ The *2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces* explored Canadians' experiences about personal experiences at home and in the workplace, in public spaces and online. Survey content included questions about inappropriate behaviours experienced online while using a cell phone or smartphone, the most serious incident experienced online while using one of these devices, the perpetrators of these incidents, and the ensuing consequences. [Back to the text.](#)
- ⁱⁱ Kalia, D., & Aleem, S. (2017). Cyber Victimization Among Adolescents: Examining the Role of Routine Activity Theory. *Journal of Psychosocial Research*, 12(1), 223–232. And, Maxwell, E., Khanna, N., & Craig, W. (2022). [Examining key populations in the context of implementing cyberbullying prevention and intervention initiatives: Literature review on the role of the family.](#) Public Safety Canada. [Back to the text.](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ Statistics Canada. (July 7 2021). [Who is a victim of crime.](#) [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{iv} Statistics Canada, Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS), 2018. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^v Statistics Canada, Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS), 2018. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{vi} Statistics Canada, Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS), 2018. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{vii} Statistics Canada, Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS), 2018. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{viii} Statistics Canada, Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS), 2018. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^{ix} Statistics Canada, Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS), 2018. [Back to the text.](#)
- ^x Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice and Community Safety Statistics, Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, 2014-2022. Custom data tabulation. [Back to the text.](#)