

**Comparison with Cycle 3, Cycle 8 and  
The Violence Against Women Survey**

**GSS CYCLE 13 ON VICTIMIZATION**  
**COMPARISON WITH CYCLE 3, CYCLE 8 AND**  
**THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SURVEY**

Cycle 13 in 1999 was the third cycle of the GSS to collect information on the nature and extent of criminal victimization in Canada. The two previous cycles, Cycle 8 in 1993 and Cycle 3 in 1988, collected information on victimization and non-intentional accidents. Since the National Population Health Survey now collects information on accidents, these questions have been dropped from Cycle 13. New content has been added on public perception of the prison and parole systems, hate crime, additional information on the offender (age, sex), the use of victim services and willingness to participate in victim-offender reconciliation.

Focus content for the two previous victimization cycles included victim services (1988) and drugs and alcohol (1993). For the 1999 GSS on victimization, focus content includes modules on spousal violence and senior abuse, and questions measuring public perception toward alternatives to imprisonment. Some of the questions about spousal violence are similar to those asked in the 1993 Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS).

**Comparing measures of victimization over time**

Measures of victimization from Cycle 13 are not strictly comparable with Cycle 8 and Cycle 3.

1. Spousal violence was measured in special focus content modules in Cycle 13, resulting in more precise estimates of spousal assault. Incidents of spousal violence that occurred in the past 12 months must be excluded from both Cycle 13 and Cycle 8 to make comparisons between the two cycles.
2. In 1999, the definition of assault was adjusted to make it more consistent with Criminal Code definitions. In previous victimization cycles, any threat of physical harm was counted as an assault. In Cycle 13, only threats that were face-to-face and that the respondent believed would be carried out were counted as assaults.
3. The definition of a personal victimization incident was adjusted to make it more consistent with the definition used by administrative police reported crime records. In 1999, one victimization was counted for each victim of a personal crime. In previous victimization cycles, a single victimization report that involved several victims was counted as one incident, and the weight for the incident report was divided by the number of victims aged 15 and over.

Analysts are cautioned against making comparisons between measures of victimization from Cycle 13 and Cycle 8 without making the necessary adjustments to Cycle 8. Comparisons of measures of violent crime, including physical assault, sexual assault and robbery between Cycle 13 and Cycle 3 are not possible because the questions necessary

to adjust the assault definition were not asked on Cycle 3. Analysts are advised to contact the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics for more information (See User's Guide Section 9 "Additional Information")

### **Comparing measures of spousal abuse over time**

Measures of spousal abuse from Cycle 13 are not strictly comparable with the VAWS, due to certain differences in survey methodology, questionnaire wording and reference periods. For example:

- The VAWS collected information on incidents of violence against women, including wife abuse, experienced in the past 12 months and since the age of 16. Cycle 13 collected information on experiences of spousal abuse over the past five years, and the number of incidents of spousal violence that occurred in the past 12 months.
- Cycle 13 collected information about abuse by a previous partner only if the respondent had contact with their ex-partner in the past five years, while the VAWS did not have this restriction.
- The target population for VAWS was women aged 18 and over living in the ten provinces, while the target population for Cycle 13 was both men and women aged 15 and over in the ten provinces.

Analysts are cautioned against making comparisons between measures of spousal abuse from Cycle 13 and the VAWS without making the necessary adjustments. Analysts are advised to contact the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics for more information (See User's Guide Section 9 "Additional Information")

Additional comparisons between the four surveys appear below, followed by a question by question comparison of the three GSS cycles on Victimization. Reference is also made to the 1993 VAWS where appropriate.

	1999 GSS	1993 GSS	1988 GSS	1993 VAWS
<b>Target population</b>	-Male and female respondents aged 15 and over  - 10 provinces	Male and female respondents aged 15 and over  -10 provinces	Male and female respondents aged 15 and over  -10 provinces	Female respondents aged 18 and over  - 10 provinces
<b>Sample size</b>	26,000	10,000	10,000	12,300
<b>Unit of analysis for victimization /abuse reports</b>	-incidents for section V -persons for sections L,M,N,P	-incidents	-incidents	-incidents (where possible) and persons
<b>Reference period</b>	-past 12 months for section B,V  -past 5 years for modules on spousal and senior violence (some 12 month indicators)  -1 lifetime victimization question	-past 12 months  -1 lifetime victimization question	- during 1987  - 1 question on victimization since Jan 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1985	-past 12 months and lifetime (since the age of 16)

## **Cycle 13 Questionnaire Revisions and Modifications**

### ***Section A: Perceptions, History and Risk***

In 1999, a new set of questions on public perceptions toward alternatives to imprisonment was added. In addition, questions related to public perceptions of the prison and parole systems were included to complement the questions dealing with public perceptions of the police and courts. Finally, one open-ended question was added asking the respondent whether they did anything else to increase their personal safety that had not already been mentioned.

### ***Section B: Criminal Victimization Screening Section***

This section was designed to collect information on the type of crime and number of times the respondent was a victim of crime over the past 12 months. Each time a crime was reported in this section, a Crime Incident Report (Section V) was completed. As in Cycle 3 and Cycle 8, respondents were asked to include incidents committed by family and non-family members. However, due to the addition of the spousal violence and senior abuse questions (Sections C through K), respondents were asked to exclude physical and sexual assaults committed by current and previous spouses or common-law partners. In addition, respondents who were 65 years of age and older were asked to exclude physical assaults by children and caregivers, and sexual assaults by caregivers. As a result of these specific exclusions, a separate set of questions about assaults during the past 12 months were asked for those under the age of 65 and those aged 65 and over.

### ***Sections C and E: Emotional and Financial Abuse by a Spouse/ Partner and/or Ex-Partner***

In 1999, questions were added to collect data on emotional and financial abuse by intimate partners. Respondents were asked a series of questions ranging from limiting contact with family and friends to preventing them from knowing about family income. These types of questions were modeled after the VAWS with two additional items to supplement the original scale. These include harming, or threatening to harm someone close and deliberately damaging or destroying possessions or property.

### ***Sections D and F: Physical and Sexual Violence by a Spouse/ Partner and/or Ex-Partner***

In 1999, in order to capture specific information on physical and sexual violence by current and ex-partners during the past 5 years, new sections were added to the survey. In 1988 and 1993, only one screening question was asked of all respondents to capture information on all forms of assault experienced in the past 12 months.

Measures of violence by current or previous partners were obtained through a number of categories of violent acts ranging from threats of violence to the use of guns or other weapons, and sexual assault. The scale of items was similar to that used in the VAWS. However, in Cycle 13, respondents were asked all of the items in the scale. In the VAWS, respondents who did not disclose any violence skipped out of the sequence after every three items with the question “Has he ever been violent toward you in any other way?” Only if the respondent said “yes” was she asked subsequent questions in the scale. Furthermore, eight of the ten questions were randomized in the 1999 survey, unlike the VAWS. In 1999, all respondents were first asked the first two questions in the scale and the remaining 8 were randomized.

In addition, two questions on the scale were modified to be more reflective of men’s experiences of physical violence. The item that asked respondents whether their partner had “beaten them up” was modified to ask “Has he/she beaten you?”. The question “Has he/she pushed, grabbed or shoved you?” was modified, adding the words “...in a way that could hurt you”. This modification helped ensure that only violent acts were being captured.

Emphasis in this section was on violence within the relationship and not on quantifying individual acts or events. However, respondents were asked on how many different occasions their spouse was violent toward them. Respondents who had a current partner were asked whether the violence occurred during the relationship or during a temporary separation. Those respondents who stated that they had been in their relationship for less than 5 years were also asked whether the violence occurred before they were married or living together. In the case of previous partners, respondents were asked whether the violence happened after separation, and if so, whether it increased after separation. Respondents who reported one or more acts of violence by a spouse or partner were asked to respond to questions in an abuse report (Sections L and M).

### ***Sections G and J: Emotional and Financial Abuse of Seniors by Children and Caregivers***

These questions were based on similar questions from the 1993 VAWS. Respondents were asked the questions in Section G if they had children with whom they had had contact in the past five years. Respondents were asked the questions in Section J if a caregiver came to their home to assist them.

Three new items relating to financial abuse were added to these sections. In the case of caregivers, respondents were not asked about limiting contacts with family or friends, nor were they asked about control over family finances.

### ***Sections H and K: Violence Against Seniors by Children and Caregivers***

These sections used the same approach and scale of questions that was used in the sections concerning spousal violence. The item on sexual violence, however, was not asked of respondents in the case of children. Respondents who reported one or more acts of violence by a child or caregiver were asked to respond to questions in an abuse report (Sections N and P).

Section K also included a question about lifetime experiences of victimization. This question was asked of all survey respondents. The intent of this question was to look at lifetime experiences of victimization and to offer respondents an opportunity to indicate incidents of crime that happened outside the 12 month and 5 year timeframes.

### ***Sections L, M, N and P: Abuse Reports<sup>1</sup>***

In 1999, respondents who were victims of spousal assault or seniors who were assaulted by children or caregivers were asked to complete a detailed abuse report. In Cycle 3 and Cycle 8, victims of all forms of assault during the past year completed the same detailed incident report as victims of robbery, break and enter, theft, etc. For past victimization surveys, spousal assault can only be identified by examining the relationship of the offender to the victim.

The Cycle 13 spousal and senior abuse reports were designed to collect detailed information about violence in current or previous marriages/common-law relationships, and violence against seniors by children or caregivers. They were not meant to provide details about each separate incident of violence.

### ***Section Q: Classification***

Some new questions have been added to the classification section of Cycle 13. For example, Cycle 13 asks questions about the place of birth and the educational attainment of the respondent's mother and father. Questions about activity limitations and the respondent's use of drugs for sleeping, anxiety and depression were also updated, and a question about the respondent's racial or cultural background was added. Questions about use of alcohol, educational attainment and labour force status of the respondent's spouse have also been added. A question was also added asking how long the respondent had lived in their current dwelling.

### ***Section V: Crime Incident Report***

The crime incident report was created to collect detailed information on characteristics of victimization incidents during the past 12 months. The 1999 crime incident report is similar in design to the 1993 and 1988 crime incident reports, with a few modifications. All victims were asked if the victimization incident was related to their own or the offender's use of drugs or alcohol, and if they had attempted to obtain or had obtained civil or criminal compensation. In previous victimization cycles, victims of sexual

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<sup>1</sup> Too few seniors reported experiences of violence by children or caregivers to produce reliable estimates. Consequently, Sections N and P of the questionnaire are not included in the microdata file.

assault were not asked these questions. More detailed questions were also asked about who the victim spoke to about the incident and use of victim services. The question concerning the time of the incident was dropped in 1999 and other questions were added. These included:

- questions about the age and sex of the offender(s);
- two questions concerning hate crime;
- one question about victim/offender mediation;
- one question about whether there was anything else the police could have done to help; and
- one question to assess how the respondent was affected at the time of the incident.

The wording “sexually assaulted” was changed in 1999 to “forced sexual activity” and “unwanted sexual touching” in order to better reflect the range of acts that can be considered sexual assault under the Criminal Code.