

Family Violence and Violence Against Women

Introduction

Information in this report is presented from the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS). RRFSS is an on-going telephone survey occurring in various public health units across Ontario. On a monthly basis, a random sample of adults in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark counties, aged 18 years and older, is interviewed regarding a variety of risk behaviours, knowledge, attitudes and awareness about health related topics of importance to public health. The survey was conducted by the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at York University, on behalf of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

This report focuses on:

1. **Family Violence:** The purpose of this module is to determine the general public's opinions about the prevalence and seriousness of family violence as an issue in their community; public awareness about the effects of family violence on children; awareness of woman abuse during pregnancy.
2. **Violence Against Women:** The purpose is to determine community residents' knowledge of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, specifically abuse against women in a sexual relationship. The questions were adapted from a survey conducted by EKOS Research Associates (2002) for the Health Canada report entitled: Family Violence in Canada: A Statistical Profile 2002.
3. **Routine Universal Comprehensive Screening:** The purpose is to determine community residents' knowledge of the Routine Universal Comprehensive Screening (RUCS) protocol to measure changes in knowledge over time and to inform program planning.

Questions pertaining to Family Violence were asked in January and February 2004 and October 2004 to December 2005. For this document the data were combined from a total of 1615 adults who responded during the data collection period. Questions pertaining to Violence against Women were asked from March 2003 to December 2003, when there were 1015 respondents.

Data from RRFSS are analyzed following standard data analysis protocols. All results are weighted to adjust for household size. Estimates are presented with 95% Confidence Intervals (C.I.). A 95% Confidence Interval indicates that there is a 95% probability that the true value of the variable measure (proportion) is contained within the interval. When the data is presented in a table, a * indicates that the estimate must be treated with caution due to sampling variability and a ** indicates the estimate is suppressed due to small cell size/high sampling variability.

This report may not be reproduced or distributed externally without the permission of the Epidemiologist. For more information about this report please contact John Cunningham, at 345-5685 or 1-800-660-5853 or John.Cunningham@healthunit.org. For more information on RRFSS consult the website at www.rfss.on.ca. Consult the Health Unit website at www.healthunit.org for information on Childhood Injury.

Data Results: Family Violence_____

Question 1: To what extent do you think there is family violence in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark?

The table below indicates that just over half of the surveyed population thought there was “some” family violence in the Leeds Grenville and Lanark region. Fairly even proportions responded on either side of the majority view: 15.6% thought that there was “a little” and 13.6 % “a lot”. While there is no common understanding of what is meant by these descriptors, (i.e. – what is “some” or “a little”) the data do provide evidence that the adult population believes there is family violence in the LGL area.

*Perceptions about the Amount of Family Violence in
Leeds, Grenville and Lanark (n=1615)*

	%	95% C.I.
None	2.5	1.7-3.3
A little	15.4	13.6-17.2
Some	52.2	49.8-54.6
A lot	13.6	11.9-15.3
Don't know/refused	16.3	14.5-18.1

Question 2: In general, compared to five years ago, do you think the amount of family violence has gone up, gone down, or stayed about the same?

This question excludes those respondents who answered “don't know and refused” to question 1. Most of the respondents felt that the amount of violence had stayed the same or gone up. It is impossible to say upon what factors these opinions are based; it is important to emphasize that these data reflect perceptions.

*Perceptions about the Amount of Family Violence
Compared to Five Years Ago (n=1351)*

	%	95% C.I.#
Up	32.8	30.3-35.3
Down	6.0	4.7-7.3
Stayed the same	48.2	45.5-50.9
Don't know/refused	13.1	11.3-14.9

Question 3: In general, compared to five years ago, do you think family violence is seen as a more serious problem or a less serious problem, or that it has stayed about the same?

This question excludes those respondents who answered “don't know and refused” to question 1. As shown in the table below, the majority of respondents felt that family violence was seen as a more serious problem. Interestingly, a sizable minority adopted the opposite stance – that family violence was seen as a less serious problem than five years ago.



*Perceptions about the Seriousness of Family Violence
Compared to Five Years Ago (n=1351)*

	%	95% C.I.#
More serious	57.5	54.9-60.1
Stayed about the same	2.3	1.5-3.1
Less serious	36.0	33.4-38.6
Don't know/refused	4.1	3.1-5.3

Question 4: Do you think by becoming pregnant a woman is more likely to be abused by her partner, somewhat more likely to be abused by her partner, somewhat less likely to be abused by her partner, that it makes no difference, or is this something that you are not sure about?

When asked whether they thought by becoming pregnant a woman is more or less likely to be abused by her partner, more than half of the respondents indicated that they didn't know.

*Perceptions about the Extent of Abuse in Pregnant Women
Compared to Women Who Aren't Pregnant, n=1615*

	%	95% C.I.
Much more likely	5.0	6.1-10.8
Somewhat more likely	8.3	7.0-9.6
Somewhat less likely	10.0	8.5-11.5
No difference	18.5	16.6-20.4
Don't know	57.9	55.5-60.3

These data were also analyzed by gender. Females were almost twice as likely as males to think there was an increased likelihood of abuse associated with pregnancy (16.8% compared to 8.4%). However, for both genders knowledge of this phenomenon was very low. Almost 60% of both males and females did not know if there was any relationship between pregnancy and a change in the likelihood of abuse by the woman's partner. Males were significantly more likely than females to believe that pregnancy put women at a decreased risk of abuse.

*Perceptions about the Extent of Abuse in Pregnant Women
Compared to Women Who Aren't Pregnant, by gender*

	Males n=688		Females n=927	
	%	95 % C.I.	%	95 C.I.
Somewhat or much more likely	8.4	6.3-10.5	16.8	14.4-19.2
Somewhat less likely	14.8	12.1-17.5	6.4	4.8-8.0
No difference	19.2	16.3-22.1	18.0	15.5-20.5
Don't know	57.4	53.7-61.1	58.3	55.1-61.5

For the most part, responses to this question were similar across the age groups. Those in the youngest age group (18-24 years) appeared less likely than the middle age groups to think abuse was more likely in pregnancy. The sample size for the youngest age group was somewhat small, but this observation could be described statistically as borderline significant. Older individuals (65 and up) were significantly more likely than middle age groups to state they were not sure about the answer, and less likely to state "no difference".



*Perceptions about the Extent of Abuse in Pregnant Women
Compared to Women Who Aren't Pregnant, by age*

	18-24, n=115		25-44, n=494		45-64, n=667		65+, n=306	
	%	95 % C.I.	%	95 % C.I.	%	95%CI	%	95%CI
Somewhat or much more likely	7.8*	2.9-12.7	14.6	11.5-17.7	13.6	11.0-16.2	10.8	7.3-16.4
Somewhat less likely	14.8*	8.3-21.3	9.7	7.1-12.3	10.9	8.5-13.3	8.8*	5.6-12.0
No difference	21.7*	14.2-29.2	21.5	17.9-25.1	19.5	16.5-22.5	12.1	8.4-15.8
Don't know	55.7	46.6-64.8	54.0	49.6-58.4	55.5	51.7-59.3	68.0	62.8-73.2

Question 5: Do you think children who see or hear violence in their OWN family are much more likely, somewhat more likely, somewhat less likely to have problems learning at school than other children, or do you think there is no difference?

The table below indicates that there was a consistently high belief that witnessing violence in their own families increased the risk to children of emotional and/or social difficulties.

*Beliefs about the Occurrence of Effects in Children Who Witness
Family Violence in Their Own Family, n=1615*

	Much more likely % (95% C.I.)	Somewhat more likely % (95% C.I.)	Somewhat likely % (95% C.I.)	No Difference % (95% C.I.)	Don't Know % (95% C.I.)
Depression	45.3 (42.9-47.7)	37.2 (34.8-39.6)	1.2* (0.7-1.7)	6.3 (5.1-7.5)	9.4 (8.0-10.8)
Problems learning at school	46.3 (43.9-48.7)	40.5 (38.1-42.9)	1.5* (0.9-2.1)	5.8 (4.7-6.9)	5.8 (4.7-6.9)
Problems getting along with other children	42.6 (40.2-45.0)	41.2 (38.8-43.6)	3.7 (2.8-4.6)	5.9 (7.0-9.9)	6.5 (5.3-7.7)

Results: Violence Against Women _____

Questions 1 to 5: For each of the following behaviours, please tell me, if you would always, usually, some of the time, or never consider it to be woman abuse if it happened in an intimate relationship:

- Yelling swearing, threatening or humiliating a woman
- Pushing, grabbing or shoving a woman
- Preventing a woman from having adequate food or shelter or seeking medical attention when needed
- Throwing, smashing, hitting or kicking a woman's things or hurting her pets?"
- Unwanted or forced sexual activity with a woman

The table below shows the fairly widespread recognition of the concepts of the different types of abuse. The analyses were also run by gender, and the results were very similar for both males and females.



The indicators proposed for use by the module development group focus on the percentage of adults who consider a given behaviour to “always” constitute abuse. Sexual abuse and abuse related to denying a woman the necessities of life were most widely recognized as “always” abuse. Verbal or psychological abusive behaviours were least recognized as “always” a form of abuse.

Beliefs that certain behaviours are considered abuse, n=1014

Yelling, swearing, threatening or humiliating a woman	%	95% C.I.
Always	63.7	60.7-66.7
Usually	11.5	9.5-13.5
Some of the time	16.1	13.8-18.4
Other response: never; it depends; don't know, refused.	8.7	7.0-10.4
Pushing, grabbing, or shoving a woman	%	95% C.I.
Always	74.9	72.2-77.6
Usually	8.0	6.3-9.7
Some of the time	10.0	8.2-11.8
Other response: never; it depends; don't know, refused.	7.2	5.6-8.8
Preventing a woman from having adequate food or shelter or seeking medical attention when needed	%	95% C.I.
Always	87.1	85.0-89.2
Usually	2.4*	1.5-3.3
Some of the time	4.6*	3.3-5.9
Other response: never; it depends; don't know, refused.	6.0	4.5-7.5
Throwing, smashing hitting, or breaking a woman's things or hurting her pets	%	95% C.I.
Always	83.4	81.1-85.7
Usually	4.4*	3.1-5.7
Some of the time	6.0	4.5-7.5
Other response: never; it depends; don't know, refused.	6.2	4.7-7.7
Unwanted or forced sexual activity with a woman	%	95% C.I.
Always	87.1	85.0-89.2
Usually	2.2*	1.3-3.1
Some of the time	4.8*	3.5-6.1
Other response: never; it depends; don't know, refused.	6.0	4.5-7.5

Data Results: Routine Universal Comprehensive Screening _____

The first question of the module is posed to all adult respondents, male and female. The remaining three questions are asked to females only. Over the 2006 data collection period (January through August inclusive) the sample comprised 696 adults aged 18 years and over; 46% males were males, 54% females. The data has been summarized below by for each indicator.

Indicator 1: % of adults (18+) who think that at least 25% of women in their own community have ever experienced abuse within an intimate relationship.

In Leeds Grenville and Lanark, 34% (95% C.I. 30.5-37.5) of 696 respondents thought that more than 25% of women had experienced abuse at some time. 49.7% (95% C.I. 46.0-53.4) estimated that 25% or less of women in the community had ever been abused in an intimate relationship.



16.1% (13.4-18.8) of respondents answered that they did not know. Males were significantly more likely than females to think the percentage of women who had ever been abused was less than 10%. The proportion of males with this belief was 22.8% (18.2-27.4) in contrast to a female proportion of only 11.2% (8.0-14.4)

Indicator 2: % of pregnant women (18+) who have been asked by their health care professional if they are currently or have ever been abused.

In Leeds Grenville and Lanark, the sample of pregnant women was too small to conduct this analysis. Furthermore, the indicator is problematic in that there is some incongruence between question posed to respondents and the indicator wording. The question asked of women is as follows: "Thinking about the last time you visited a doctor or other health care professional, were you asked if you are currently or have ever been abused in any way?" Thus the wording of the question refers only to the last health professional contact, rather than reaching back over a period of time, as is implied by the wording of the indicator.

In response to the question as posed, 8.4% (5.7-11.1) of 374 women (pregnant and non-pregnant) responded that they had been asked about abuse at their last visit. This estimate should be regarded with some caution due to the potential of high variability associated with a small sample of survey respondents.

Indicator 3 - % of women (18+) who have read or heard about the RUCS program in their community.

In Leeds Grenville and Lanark, 7.7 % (5.1-10.3) of 374 surveyed women had read or heard about the RUCS program. This estimate is again accompanied by a caution related to high sample variability.

Indicator 4 - % of women who were first made aware of the RUCS program through friends/family, newspaper, nurse/doctor/health care professional/, pamphlet, poster, radio or other medium.

Only 29 women were surveyed on this question, so the sample is very small, resulting in unreportable estimates.