

Brief on Police-Reported Crime Statistics in Canada, 2021: Hate Crimes Targeting Sexual Orientation and Sex or Gender (updated, March 2023)

Key Takeaways

- Since 2019, hate crimes targeting sexual orientation have risen in Canada. In 2019, there were 265 hate crimes that targeted sexual orientation, and in 2021, this number rose to 423. Since 2020, there has been a rise of 64%.
- Of these 423 hate crimes, a majority (77%) targeted the gay and lesbian community, a smaller number was directed toward bisexuals (2%) and other sexual orientations (11%), and 10% of incidents had an unreported sexual orientation target.
- While most hate crimes targeting sexual orientation were perpetrated against men and boys, 74% of victims of hate crimes related to gender were women and girls. No data were compiled for other gender identities.

Background

This Statistics Canada report on police-reported hate crimes in Canada was released on August 2, 2022. These hate crimes are defined as those that target a person's identity such as gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origin, or religion. Hate crimes impact the wider community, and although the current report focuses on police-reported crimes, it is important to recall that victims belonging to minoritized communities may not always report hate crimes that are perpetrated against them to police authorities (Erentzen & Schuller, 2020). In other words, it is likely that hate crimes targeting sexual orientation or gender identity, among other identity markers, are more numerous than what is currently reported by Statistics Canada.

In the past 30 years, Canada has legislated on several fronts to prevent discrimination against 2SLGBTQ people. For instance, sexual orientation was included as prohibited grounds from discrimination to the Canadian Human Rights Act in 1996, same-sex marriage was legalized across the country in 2005 (Canadian Heritage, 2022), and conversion therapies were rendered illegal in 2022 (Bill C-4, 2021). However, despite these legal advances aimed at improving the rights and preventing crimes against 2SLGBTQ people, statistics show that hate crimes targeting these individuals are on the rise.

It is also noteworthy that intersex people are still under-protected in Canada, since sex characteristics are not listed as prohibited grounds against discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act, and exceptional provisions protecting medical practitioners performing nonconsensual interventions on intersexualized minors' bodies exist in section 268(3) of Canada's Criminal Code on aggravated assault (Criminal Code, 1985).

In 2021, the global police-reported crime rates remained stable, as measured by the Crime Severity Index. However, there was an increase in violent crimes (+5%) and reported hate crimes (+27%) since 2020. The latter increase can be attributed to an increase in hate crimes targeting sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, and religion. There are several factors that impact police-reported crimes including (but not limited to) an individual's decision to report a crime to police, differences in polices services based on municipality and region, and socioeconomic factors.

What does the 2021 report state about hate crimes against 2SLGBTQI people? What has changed?

The report on police-reported hate crimes included statistics on hate crimes targeting sexual orientation, finding that of the 423 hate crimes targeting sexual orientation, most were targeted toward the gay and lesbian community (77%). This is an increase of 64% since 2020. While the report did not provide intersectional data, it is notable that hate crimes relating to race and ethnicity (+6%), as well as religion (+67%), also rose in 2021. Almost one-third of homicide victims were identified by police as persons designated as racialized.

In terms of gender, it is reported that 62% of all hate crime victims were men and boys, while 38% were women and girls. In addition, men and boys were more likely to sustain injuries when targeted by a hate crime. However, when the reported crimes specifically targeted gender or sex, 74% of victims were women and girls. Victims of hate crimes related to sexual orientation and sex or gender were also more likely to know the perpetrator than victims of hate crimes targeting religion and race or ethnicity (specifically 52% of victims of hate crimes related to sexual orientation, 40% for sex or gender, 34% for religion, and 33% for race or ethnicity).

Conclusion

Police-reported hate crimes are on the rise in Canada. And while it is difficult to determine whether this tendency is due to the fact that victims may report more crimes, it remains a likely possibility that the absolute number of hate crimes, reported or not, has increased in the past few years across the country. Despite legislation aimed at protecting 2SLGBTQ rights and preventing discrimination or violence against our communities, this upward trend is concerning.

It is also worth noting that the 2021 report on police-reported hate crimes is based on the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, which gathers data from police services on criminal incidents and clearance statuses of those incidents. However, as reported by *The Daily*:

The option for police to code victims as 'gender diverse' in the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Survey was implemented in 2018... Given that small counts of victims identified as being gender diverse may exist, the UCR data available have been recoded with these victims distributed in the 'men' or 'women' categories based on the regional distribution of victims' gender [to ensure] the protection of confidentiality and privacy of victims. (note to Table 6; Statistics Canada, 2023)

Although it is commendable to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of crime victims, the lack of data on gender diverse people related to crime makes it difficult to have an appropriate understanding of the concerns for these communities. Policy- and law-making involves knowing the reality of the world we live in, and therefore we urge governments not only to include gender diversity in their reporting procedures to counter the rise in hate crimes targeting 2SLGBTQI people, including gender-diverse and intersex people, but also to take swift and meaningful action to address the increase in hate and violence against 2SLGBTQI people.

References

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