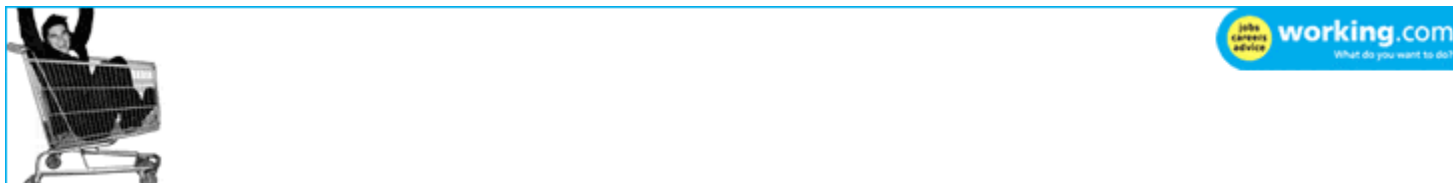


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Violent crime stalks aboriginal Canadians: study



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Aboriginal people are far more likely to be victimized by violent crime, according to a study released on Tuesday by Statistics Canada.

The report from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics concludes that while aboriginals accounted for, on average, about three per cent of the Canadian population between 1997 and 2004, they comprised 17 per cent of victims and 23 per cent of those accused of committing a homicide during that span.

Violent incidents were found to be more likely to be committed by someone who was known to the victim. Aboriginal people were victimized by a stranger in one-quarter of all violent incidents, as compared with 45 per cent of such incidents against non-aboriginal victims.

When taking population differences into account, it was found that aboriginals were 10 times more likely to be accused of homicide than were non-aboriginals.

However, they were less likely to be charged with first-degree murder. Between 1997 and 2004, 20 per cent of aboriginals accused were charged with first-degree murder, compared with 46 per cent of non-aboriginal accused.

The disparity in the incidence of reported domestic abuse was vast. Overall, 21 per cent of aboriginals said they had suffered violence from a current or previous spouse or partner in the five-year period up to 2004. The rate for non-aboriginals was six per cent.

Overall, aboriginals were nearly twice as likely as their non-aboriginal counterparts to be repeat victims of crime.

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Lucille Bruce, executive director of the Native Women's Transition Centre in Winnipeg, was not surprised to hear the statistics. Aboriginal people - especially native women - are marginalized in Canadian society, which makes them more vulnerable to crime, she said.

The government must play a role in finding a solution, she said.

"I think they need to put more funding and resources in the aboriginal community to address those issues," she told CBC News. "Healing has to happen within communities, so that we can begin to stop the generational kinds of violence that we've experienced and also address the root causes."

- Rate of assault, homicide higher on reserves -

Despite the disparities, the degree to which aboriginal and non-aboriginal respondents felt safe while home alone at night was not different.

The study found that aboriginal people aged 15 to 34 were at greatest risk, with the rate of violent crime more than twice as high as the rate for those 35 years of age and older.

The issue of violence on reserves was also investigated. The rates of assault, sexual assault and homicides were found to be six- to eight-times higher on reserves than rates in the rest of Canada.

The only violent crime with a lower on-reserve rate was robbery.

The centre used data from victimization, police and corrections surveys to compile its report.

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