

**Provincial Survey of Attitudes Towards Violence
Research Project**

March 2002

Summary of Key Findings

Awareness of the Violence Prevention Initiative is low. Overall, 15% of adults (approximately 62,945 adults) in Newfoundland and Labrador have heard of the Violence Prevention Initiative. Most often, respondents describe exposure to the Violence Prevention Initiative through the media (59%), friends/family (11%) and/or school/work (10%).

The majority of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feel safe and comfortable in their community and surrounding area. Almost all respondents feel that their community is a safe place to live (99%), with 83% strongly agreeing with this issue.

- % Overall, 99% of respondents agree that they feel safe while at home and 83% agree that they feel safe at work.
- % Most respondents strongly agree that they know at least two people they could call in the middle of the night for assistance (94%). Furthermore, respondents possess a high degree of trust towards strangers in their community, with 94% of respondents who feel confident that in a time of trouble, strangers would provide them with assistance.

It appears that although most believe that society in general has become more violent over the past 10 years, for most, this perceived increase has had little impact on their community.

- % Overall, the majority of respondents agree that society has become more violent over the last 10 years (86%). However, less than half of respondents (40%) feel their community has become more violent over the same period of time. In fact, 56% of respondents disagree their community has become more violent.
- % A total of 81% of respondents either strongly (50%) or somewhat (31%) agree that the media generates an accurate picture of the violence in society.

In general, adults in the province express concern with the level of violence and abuse against each of the groups evaluated. However, the degree of concern is strongest for groups involving children, women, and dating relationships.

Most respondents agree that domestic violence in the home impacts the children living in the household. Approximately 93% of respondents agree that children who witness domestic violence in their home are abused by seeing it occur. In addition, 92% of adults agree that when domestic violence happens in the home, children witness it more than half of the time.

Respondents classify most of the behaviours evaluated in the study as abuse more often than violence.

- % Respondents classified nine of the 13 behaviours as abuse more often than violence. They include: name calling, withholding prescription medication, yelling or shouting at someone, withholding affection, giving the silent treatment, bullying, stalking, pushing and shoving and hitting and slapping.
- % Respondents perceive destroying property and slamming doors and drawers more often as violence, as compared to abuse.
- % The classification of spanking and withholding money as violence or abuse is more often perceived by respondents as being dependent on the situation. For spanking, half of respondents feel that its classification is dependent on the situation, compared to one third who classify it as abuse, and 10% who perceive it as violence. With regards to withholding money, 41% feel the decision whether it is violence or abuse is dependent on the situation, however a similar percentage feel it is abuse (38%).

The majority of respondents believe that individuals who are violent and abusive should be considered out of control (92%).

Most respondents believe that violence in relationships is most often caused by drugs or alcohol (85%).

Less than half of provincial adults agree that the majority of older people in abusive situations are senile or sick (48%). In fact, an equal proportion of adults agree on this point.

Female caregivers are not perceived as being more abusive than male caregivers towards children. To this end, 62% of respondents disagree that female caregivers are more abusive than males.

Eight in 10 respondents disagree that jealousy is a sign of love and affection in a relationship (79%).

It appears that most respondents believe violence and abuse can take place in any relationship, regardless of an individual's lifestyle or demographic circumstance. However, it is evident that a small proportion of respondents believe than an individual with a lower education or income level is more likely to be involved in violence and abuse relationships, either as a victim or an abuser.

For the most part, respondents would not hesitate to offer help in a situation of violence or abuse. In fact, respondents are equally as likely to offer help if they know the abuser or the victim.

It is evident that respondents have little faith in the justice system, and the manner it addresses situations of violence and abuse. In total, 89% of respondents agree our justice system is too easy on domestic abusers. Similarly, only one third of respondents agree the justice system is responsive to victims of domestic violence and abuse.

It is important that each of the groups evaluated play a prominent role in decreasing violence and abuse in Newfoundland and Labrador. For respondents, the strongest responsibility for decreasing violence and abuse lies with the police. Second to this, each individual should play a large role in the campaign.

Increased education and awareness, harsher punishments for abusers, as well as increased law enforcement are necessary for decreasing violence in Newfoundland and Labrador. One third of respondents suggested increased education and awareness, while respondents are equally as likely to recommend stiffer sentences for criminals and/or increased law enforcement (11%).

Almost all respondents can describe at least one source of assistance for individuals in abusive relationships. Most often, respondents mention the RCMP (34%), shelters (27%), the clergy (24%), and/or the RNC (23%).