

# SEXUAL ASSAULT IN ALBERTA

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*Understanding the crime funnel effect of adult-on-adult sexual assault and its discrepancies between police-reported and victim support service-reported information.*

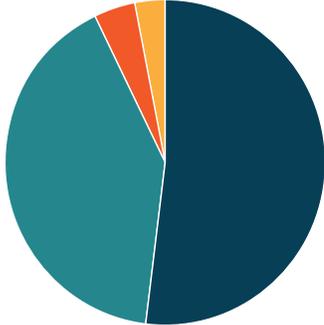
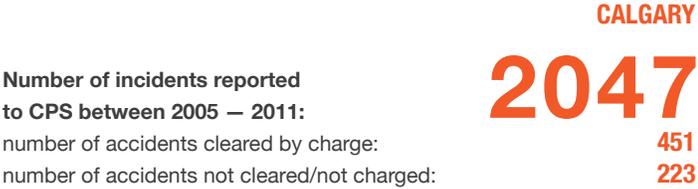
As well as pinpointing gaps in available literature on adult sexual assault in Alberta, this study is focused on identifying the underlying issues that lead to the discrepancies in the number of police-reported sexual assault crimes and the data retrieved from individuals who access victim support services. It is believed that the crime-funnel effect on sexual assault cases, where many cases do not end up continuing through the justice system in Alberta, is a root factor that results in victims choosing not to report the incident; Victims choose not to report the incident knowing that a large percentage of crimes do not proceed to court, do not result in convictions, or the sentences are not proportionate to the harm of the crime.

### Methodology

This study looks at sexual assault incidents reported by victims to Calgary Police Services (CPS) versus Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse (CCASA), and Edmonton Police Services (EPS) and Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE) from 2005 through 2013. From those analyses, the results were then compared with the number of incidents that were processed and cleared by the court system in each city during the same time frame.

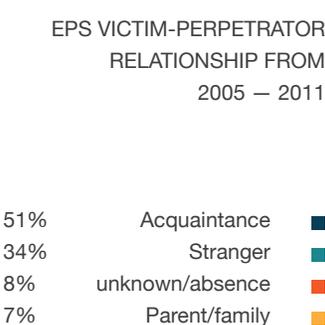
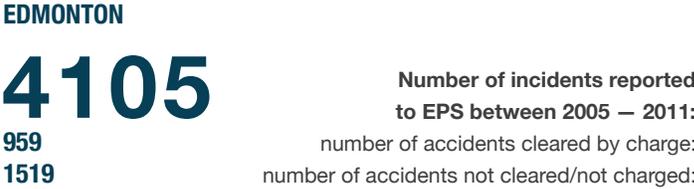
Victim-perpetrator relationship was also analyzed from 2005 through 2011 to identify trends if the relationship was a stranger, unknown/absent, a parent or family member, or an acquaintance. Patterns confirmed that the number of sexual assault incidents reported by individuals to police services was substantially lower than reporting to victim support services.

### Findings



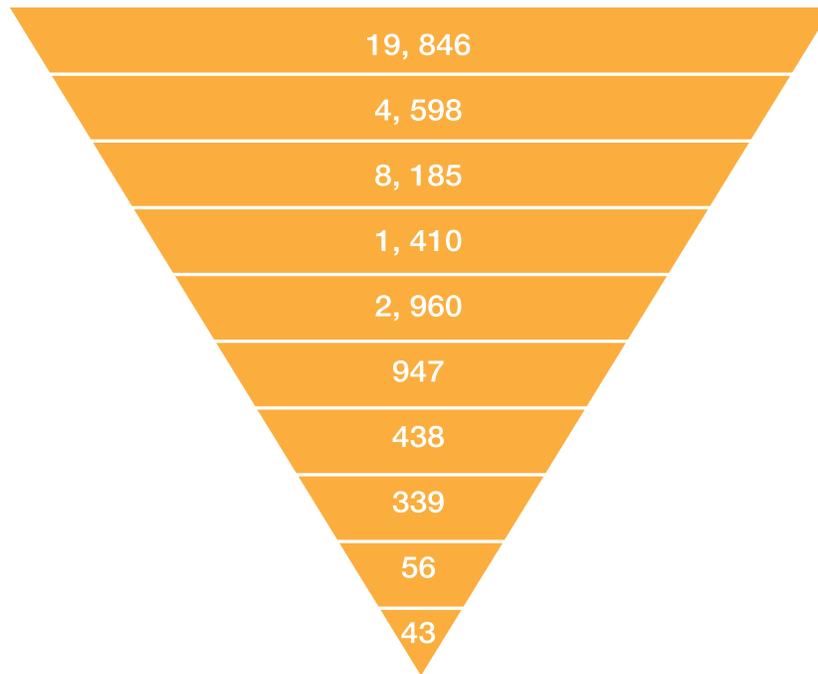
CPS VICTIM-PERPETRATOR RELATIONSHIP FROM 2005 – 2011

■ Acquaintance	52%
■ Stranger	41%
■ unknown/absence	4%
■ Parent/family	3%



EPS VICTIM-PERPETRATOR RELATIONSHIP FROM 2005 – 2011

■ Acquaintance	51%
■ Stranger	34%
■ unknown/absence	8%
■ Parent/family	7%



## THE CRIME FUNNEL EFFECT FOR ALBERTA

In Alberta, only ten per cent of sexual assault cases will proceed to court for prosecution. The median sentence lengths for sexual assault convictions are significantly less than the possible maximums articulated in the Canadian Criminal Code; and if proven, may contribute to under-reporting; and perpetrators who are brought to court and/or incarcerated upon conviction, are primarily strangers to their victims. In instances where the victim knows the perpetrator, victims report less often to police than if the perpetrator was a stranger.

## Implications

The crime-funnel effect is major factor in the attrition of cases within Alberta as incidents are processed through the criminal justice system, resulted in 14.9% of cases of sexual assault reaching court and even fewer cases resulting in a guilty disposition. Depending upon the year, the percentage of guilty cases varied from 26% to 38% of total court decisions. When comparing where victims choose to report, the difference between the police agencies and the victim service agencies varied greatly by year. The largest difference in reporting was in 2005 in Edmonton when only two per cent of cases reported to the victim service agency were reported to police. The largest inverse ratios were in Calgary in 2009 and 2010 with 179 and 131 respectively more cases were reported to police than to the victim service agencies.

The study's results can be used towards devising more efficient strategies that increase reporting. The main point to be taken away is that in the majority of all cases, regardless if incidents are reported to police or to victim service agencies, victims know their attackers, and the majority of victims are women.

## Where from here?

Since current criminal justice system processing seems to focus on the stranger attacker, we need to redirect our prevention, education and intervention efforts towards groups with the highest prevalence of risk for victimisation and perpetration.

We need to redirect our efforts away from victim blaming, victim shaming, and away from ignoring the perpetrators within our schools, offices, homes, teams, and churches.

Further study is needed in Canada to identify gaps and trends nationwide. In-depth explorations are required to richly understand the cases brought before court and the multitude of reasons victims don't report to police so that we may make meaningful change ■