



NATIVE WOMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES  
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA



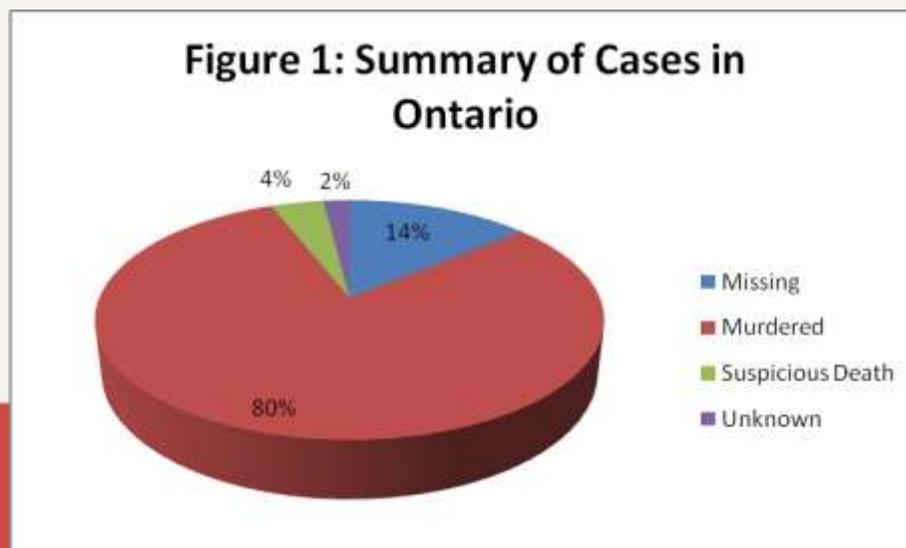
# Fact Sheet: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls in Ontario

For years, communities have pointed to the high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. As of March 31, 2010, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has gathered information about 582 cases from across the country. NWAC has worked hard to look at every case, yet we believe there are still many more to document. Based on five years of quantitative research drawn from NWAC's Sisters In Spirit database, this fact sheet examines the situation in Ontario against the national context.

## More murder cases in Ontario than the national average

NWAC has gathered information about 70 cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Ontario. This accounts for 12% of cases in NWAC's database. The large number of cases in Ontario illustrates that the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls is not just a 'western problem,' but rather a national concern impacting central Canada.

80% of cases in Ontario are murder cases, which is considerably higher than the national average (67%). The percentage of missing cases is lower—14%, versus 20% nationally (see Figure 1).

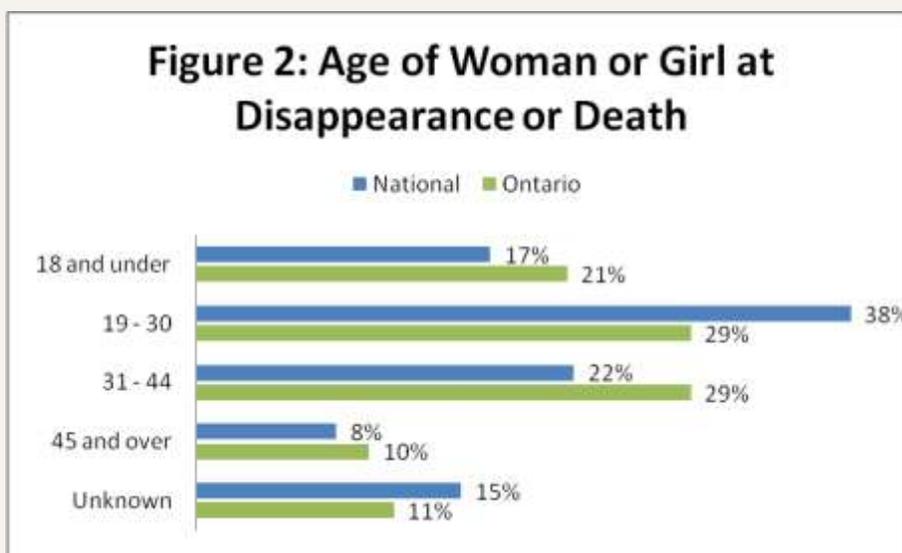


Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

4% of cases in Ontario fall under the category of suspicious death—cases that police have declared natural or accidental but that family or community members consider suspicious (Canada-wide, 4% are also cases of suspicious death).

### Fewer cases involving women under 31

Overall, the percentage of cases involving women and girls under 31 years old is lower in Ontario (50%, compared to 55% nationally). In Ontario, we see fewer cases involving women aged 19-30 years old and more cases involving aged women 31-44.



Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

Even greater differences can be seen when looking at cases of missing women and girls, compared to cases of murder. Women 19-30 represent 30% of murder cases in the province, compared to 44% nationally. NWAC’s research indicates more cases involving young women aged 18 and under, and also women 31-44 years old.

|              | Missing  |         | Murdered |         |
|--------------|----------|---------|----------|---------|
|              | National | Ontario | National | Ontario |
| 18 and under | 24%      | 10%     | 17%      | 25%     |
| 19 - 30      | 36%      | 30%     | 44%      | 30%     |
| 31 - 44      | 21%      | 20%     | 24%      | 29%     |
| 45 and over  | 10%      | 20%     | 9%       | 9%      |
| Unknown      | 10%      | 20%     | 7%       | 7%      |
| Total        | 100%     | 100%    | 100%     | 100%    |

Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010

Young women 18 and under represent 10% of disappearances in Ontario, compared to 24% nationally. We also see fewer cases involving women 19-30, but a higher percentage of cases involving women 45 and older (see Figure 3). This is significant, as too often cases of missing

Aboriginal women are stereotyped and/or dismissed as involving only ‘run-aways.’ Not only is this untrue, it implies that young girls that *do* ‘run-away’ are somehow undeserving of attention or protection.

Finally, it should be noted that the age of the woman or girl is unknown in 20% of missing cases. This means the above findings may fluctuate with more information.

### **Larger family sizes in Ontario—many children are impacted**

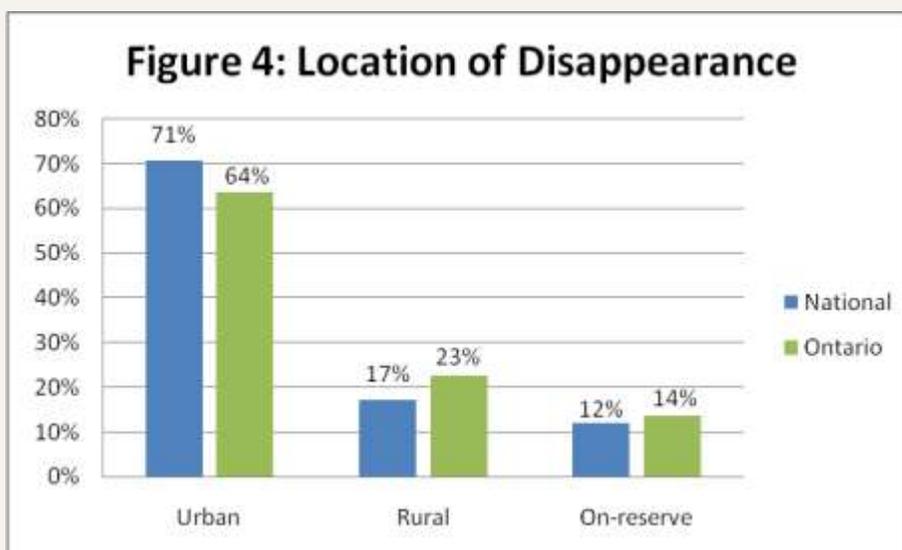
Where this information is known, NWAC has found that 90% of missing and murdered women in Ontario were mothers. This is very similar to the national situation (88%).

However, NWAC’s research also indicates larger family sizes in Ontario. 76% of women in Ontario had at least two children, compared to 59% nationally. 43% of women had three children or more, versus 33% Canada-wide.

The number of women that were mothers speaks to the intergenerational impact of this issue. There is a dire need to support family and community members who assume care for the children left behind. Collectively, there is a responsibility to ensure these children remain connected to their communities and receive the necessary supports for healing. Perhaps even more importantly, supports and resources for mothers must be understood as integral to any violence prevention strategy.

### **More cases of disappearance in rural communities than the national average**

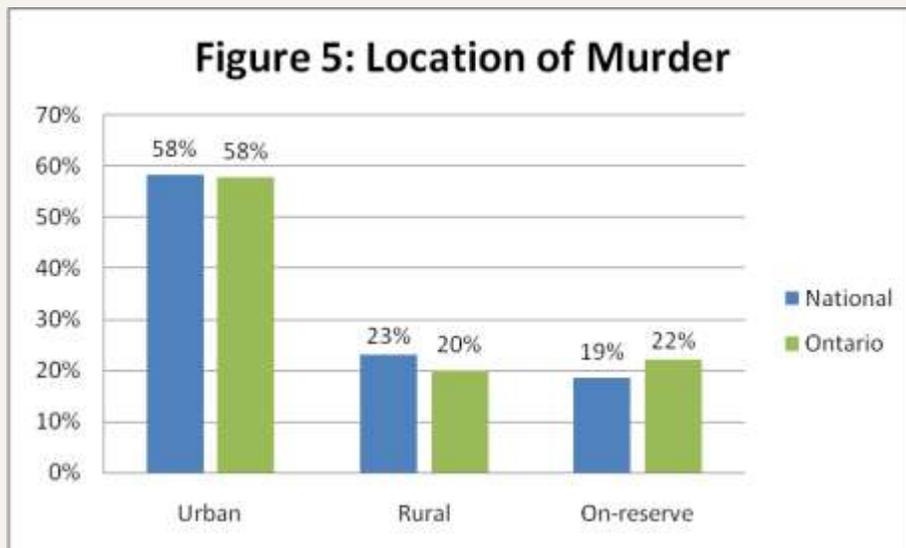
Like the national situation, most of the documented cases in Ontario occurred in urban areas—particularly Thunder Bay, Toronto, Ottawa-Gatineau. In Ontario, however, urban areas account for a smaller percentage of missing cases. Compared to the national average, more women and girls disappeared from a First Nations or rural community (see Figure 4).



Based on cases in SIS database where this information is known.

Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

Looking at murder cases we see the locations are similar to the national average. The averages between Ontario and Canada are at par in urban locations, and show only slight differences in rural and on-reserve locations.



Based on cases in SIS database where this information is known.  
 Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

### Nearly half of murder cases remain unsolved

Homicide cases are ‘cleared’ in different ways. A case can be cleared when charges are laid against an accused offender. However, a case is also considered ‘cleared’ when the offender commits suicide. This is sometimes referred to as a ‘murder-suicide.’

Only half (55%) of Ontario murder cases in NWAC’s database have been cleared by charges of homicide or by suicide of the offender. This is very similar to the national situation (see Figure 6).

|                    | National | Ontario |
|--------------------|----------|---------|
| Cleared by charge  | 53.2%    | 51.8%   |
| Cleared by suicide | 3.3%     | 3.6%    |
| Cleared otherwise  | 0.3%     | 0.0%    |
| Not cleared        | 39.4%    | 41.1%   |
| Unknown            | 3.8%     | 3.6%    |
| Total              | 100.0%   | 100.0%  |

Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010

## More women and girls died in a residential dwelling

The share of cases that took place in a residence (either the woman’s home or another residential dwelling) is slightly higher in Ontario— 65%, compared to 59% Canada-wide. Of the cases that occurred outside a residence, most took place in an open area (16%). Slightly fewer cases in Ontario occurred along a street, road or highway (see Figure 7).

| <b>Figure 7: Location of Murder or Suspicious Death in SIS Database, 2010</b>       |          |         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------|
|                                                                                     | National | Ontario |
| Residence                                                                           | 59.4%    | 64.5%   |
| Public place                                                                        | 6.8%     | 6.5%    |
| Vehicle (including public transportation)                                           | 0.4%     | 0.0%    |
| Street, road, highway                                                               | 13.7%    | 9.7%    |
| Open area                                                                           | 14.5%    | 16.1%   |
| Other                                                                               | 5.1%     | 3.2%    |
| Total known locations                                                               | 100.0%   | 100.0%  |
| Based on cases in SIS database where this information is known.                     |          |         |
| Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010 |          |         |

## More cases involving an intimate partner

Of the cases that have been cleared, NWAC’s research indicates more homicides involving a current or ex-partner—33% in Ontario versus 22% Canada-wide. In contrast to the national situation, there are no documented cases in Ontario involving a family member.

NWAC’s research also indicates fewer cases in Ontario involving an acquaintance—6%, versus 17% nationally. It should be noted, however, that NWAC is still working to determine the nature of relationship in 44% of cases—this means our findings might change with more information.

| <b>Figure 8: Relationship of Offender in Murder Cases, SIS Database 2010</b>                |          |         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|---------|
|                                                                                             | National | Ontario |
| Partner                                                                                     | 17%      | 23.5%   |
| Ex-Partner                                                                                  | 5%       | 8.8%    |
| Family, including all types of family relationships                                         | 6%       | 0.0%    |
| ‘John’ or criminal relationship                                                             | 2%       | 0.0%    |
| Acquaintance                                                                                | 17%      | 5.9%    |
| Stranger                                                                                    | 16%      | 17.6%   |
| Unknown                                                                                     | 36%      | 44.1%   |
| Total                                                                                       | 100%     | 100.0%  |
| Note: Total represents the number of cases in the SIS database for which charges were laid. |          |         |
| Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010         |          |         |

Finally, NWAC has yet to document any cases in Ontario involving a criminal relationship or ‘John.’ As noted above, this may change with more information. It must be emphasized, however, that prostitution is not a ‘cause’ of violence; rather, many women experience prostitution in the context of limited options and after experiencing multiple forms of trauma and violence.

### **Most cases handled by the Ontario Provincial Police and municipal police forces**

Policing in Ontario is carried out mainly by municipal police services, First Nations police services and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP). Where this information is known, most of the Ontario cases in NWAC’s database were handled by the OPP (40%), followed closely by municipal police services (38%). 18% of cases were found to involve multiple jurisdictions/a joint operation—usually between a First Nations police service and the OPP. 4% of cases were handled solely by a First Nations police service.

Nationally, NWAC has found that overlapping and unclear jurisdictional responsibilities to have impeded the effective resolution of some cases. Further work is required to determine how joint operations or overlapping jurisdictions impact the progress and resolution of cases in Ontario.

*For more information, read What Their Stories Tell Us: Research findings from the Sisters In Spirit initiative. This report presents demographic and statistical evidence from NWAC’s Sisters In Spirit database, while situating the issue within the larger context of root causes and ways forward. The report can be found on NWAC’s website at [www.nwac.ca](http://www.nwac.ca).*

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