



NATIVE WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA



Fact Sheet: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls in Alberta

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 Alberta against the national context.

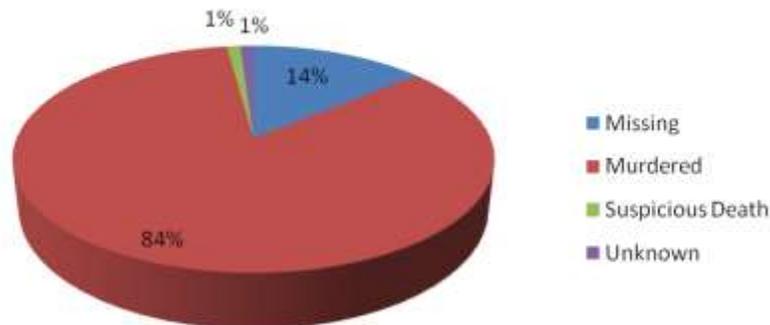
Alberta has the second highest number of cases in Canada

There are 93 cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Alberta. This accounts for 16% of all cases in NWAC's database. The number of cases in Alberta is second only to British Columbia (which accounts for about 28% of all cases).

More murder cases than missing cases

84% of cases in Alberta are murder cases, which is considerably higher than the national average (67%). The percentage of missing women and girls is lower than the national average—14% in Alberta versus 20% nationally.

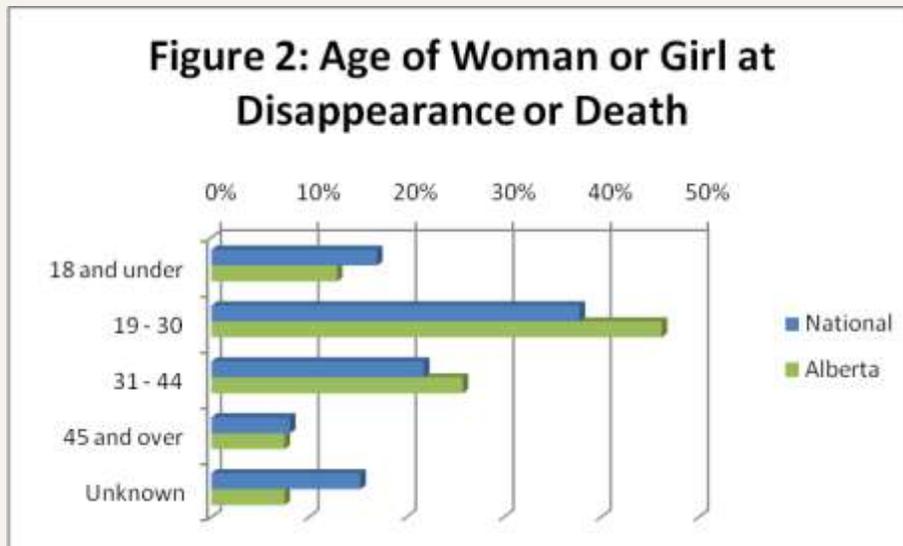
Figure 1: Summary of Cases in
Alberta



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

More missing women over the age of 30

Overall, the percentage of cases involving women and girls under the age of 31 is slightly higher in Alberta (59%, compared to 55% nationally). Within this group, however, there are fewer cases involving women 18 and under, and more cases involving women between 19 and 30 (see Figure 2).



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

Greater differences can be seen when looking at cases of missing women and girls, compared to cases of murder. In Alberta, women 18 and under represent only 10% of murder cases, compared to 17% nationally.

	Missing		Murdered	
	National	Alberta	National	Alberta
18 and under	24%	23%	17%	10%
19 - 30	36%	31%	44%	50%
31 - 44	21%	31%	24%	24%
45 and over	10%	8%	9%	8%
Unknown	10%	8%	7%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

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

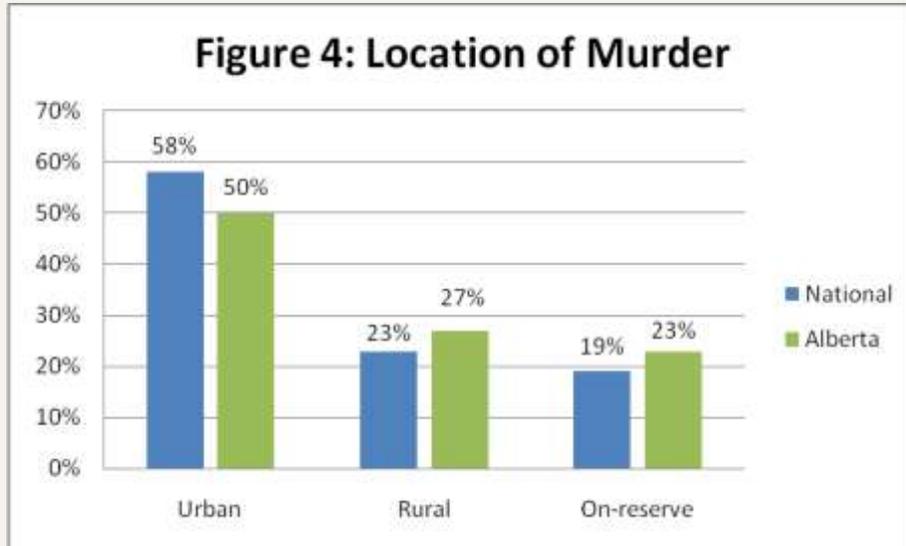
Women aged 31-44 represent almost a third of all disappearances in Alberta. This is much higher than the national average (21%). This is significant, as too often cases of missing Aboriginal women are stereotyped and/or dismissed as involving only ‘run-aways.’ Not only is this untrue, it implies that young girls that *do* ‘run-away’ are somehow undeserving of attention or protection.

Intergenerational impact of missing and murdered Aboriginal women

Of the cases where this information is known, the vast majority of cases in Alberta involve mothers (89%). This is virtually identical to the national situation (88%).

Almost half of murder cases occurred in rural or reserve communities

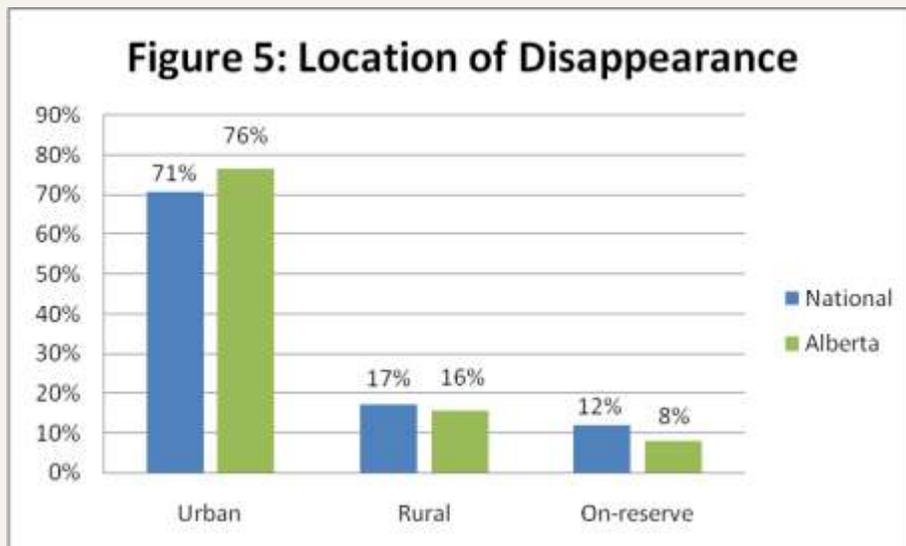
Overall, most of the known cases in Alberta occurred in urban areas, particularly Edmonton and Calgary. In Alberta, however, urban cases represent a smaller share of murder cases—50%, compared to 58% Canada-wide.



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

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

76% of Alberta’s missing women and girls disappeared from an urban area, which is higher than the national average (71%).



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

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

Slightly more unsolved cases than the national average

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.’

In Alberta, only 42% of murder cases in NWAC’s database have been cleared by charges of homicide. This is far lower than the national average (53%). However the percent of cases cleared by suicide is among the highest in Canada—almost three times higher than the national average.

Overall, the percentage of unsolved cases in Alberta is still comparable to national average—42% in Alberta, versus 39% Canada-wide.

Figure 6: Clearance Rates		
	National	Alberta
Cleared by charge	53.2%	42.3%
Cleared by suicide	3.3%	9.0%
Cleared Otherwise	0.3%	0.0%
Not Cleared	39.4%	42.3%
Unknown	3.8%	6.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

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

Fewer women and girls died in a residential dwelling

The share of cases that occurred outside a residence is considerably higher in Alberta (49% versus 41% nationally). The biggest difference can be seen with respect to cases that occurred in an open area—27% in Alberta, compared to 15% Canada-wide. Just over half of women and girls died in a residential dwelling, versus almost 60% nationally.

Figure 7: Location of Murder or Suspicious Death		
	National	Alberta
Residence	59.4%	51.1%
Public place	6.8%	8.9%
Vehicle (including public transportation)	0.4%	0.0%
Street, road, highway	13.7%	11.1%
Open area	14.5%	26.7%
Other	5.1%	2.2%
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 strangers or acquaintances

NWAC's research to date indicates fewer deaths involving intimate partner violence than the national average, but a higher percentage of cases involving family members. In Alberta, nearly 40% of cases involve strangers or acquaintances, compared to 33% nationally.

There are also slightly more cases in Alberta involving a criminal relationship or 'John.' Recognizing that women involved in prostitution are extremely vulnerable and experience high levels of violence, NWAC has worked to better understand how this experience relates to cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. To date, however, NWAC has been able to gather information in only a small number of cases. It must be emphasized 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.

	National	Alberta
Partner	17%	15%
Ex-Partner	5%	4%
Family, including all types of family relationships	6%	8%
John' or criminal relationship	2%	2%
Acquaintance	17%	19%
Stranger	16%	21%
Unknown	36%	31%
Total	100%	100%
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.		

RCMP responsible for almost of half of all cases

Policing in Alberta involves the RCMP, as well as municipal and First Nations police services. Where this information is known, NWAC has found that the majority of cases in Alberta involve the RCMP (49%), followed by municipal police forces (28%). NWAC has also found that at least 23% of cases involve more than one detachment or police service. This includes cases handled by the Project KARE, which is a joint force operation.

Nationally, NWAC has found that overlapping and unclear jurisdictional areas 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 Alberta.

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.

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