



NATIVE WOMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

L'ASSOCIATION DES FEMMES  
AUTOCHTONES DU CANADA



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

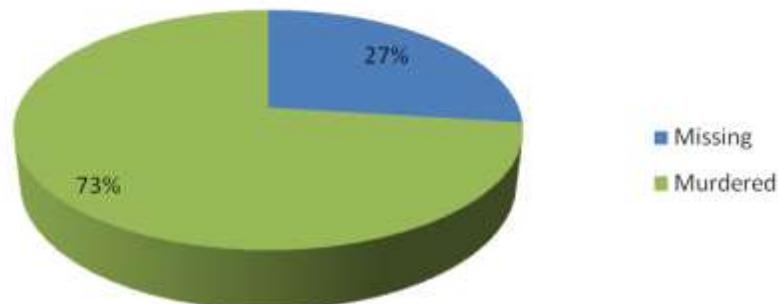
For years, communities have pointed to the high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. As of March 31, 2010, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has gathered information about 582 cases from across the country. NWAC has worked hard to look at every case, yet 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 Quebec against the national context.

## More missing cases than the national average

NWAC has gathered information about 22 cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Quebec. This accounts for 4% of cases in NWAC's database. Readers are cautioned, however, that smaller number of cases does not necessarily mean the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls is less prevalent in Quebec.<sup>1</sup>

Of the 22 cases in NWAC's database, 16 are murder cases and 6 are cases of missing women and girls. Compared to the national average, Quebec has more missing cases and a lower percentage of murder cases (Canada-wide, 20% are cases of missing women and girls and 67% are murder cases). See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Summary of Cases in  
Quebec



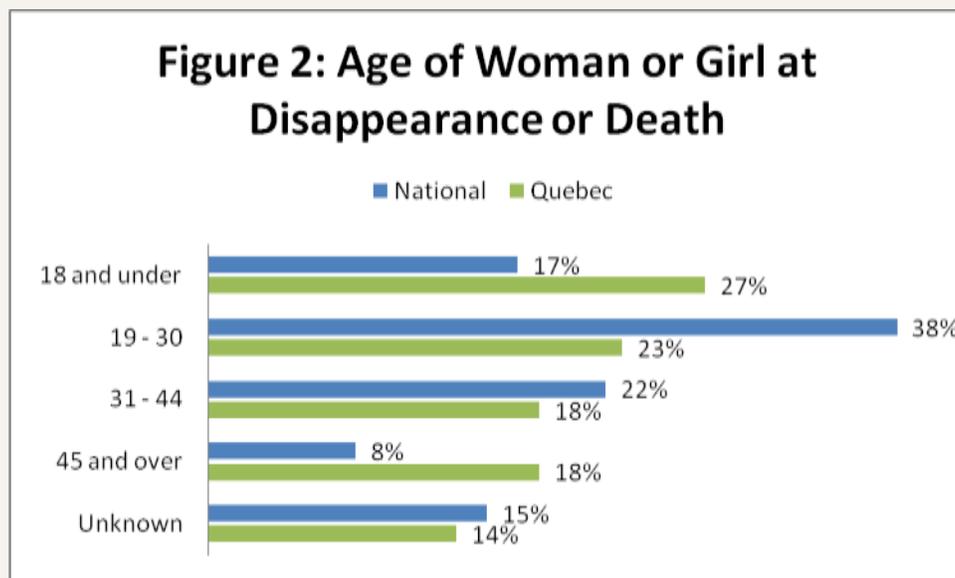
Source: Calculations by NWAC using data from Sisters In Spirit (SIS) database, 2010.

### **First Nations and Inuit women have unique needs**

Measures intended to increase safety and well-being must recognize the diversity of Aboriginal women in Quebec. Most of the missing and murdered women in Quebec are First Nations; however the number of cases involving Inuit women is high (a third of all cases). The experiences and needs of women living in the south are very different from women living in Nunavik.

### **More murder cases involving women over 30**

Most of the known cases in Quebec involve women and girls under 31 years old. Compared to the national situation, however, Quebec has fewer cases involving women aged 19-30 and more cases involving young women 18 and under. Quebec also has more cases involving women aged 45 and older.



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, compared to cases of murder. In particular, we learn that all missing women and girls in Quebec are under 31 years old. In contrast, half of Quebec murder cases in NWAC’s database involve women over 30 years old (versus 33% nationally). However, it should be noted our findings in this area may change with more information (to date, age is unknown in 19% of murder cases).

### **Intergenerational impact of missing and murdered Aboriginal women: Many are mothers**

Information about motherhood and number of children is known in 8 cases in Quebec. Of these 8 women, the vast majority are mothers.

There is a responsibility to ensure the children of missing and murdered Aboriginal women remain connected to their communities and receive the necessary supports for healing. There is also a dire need to support family and community members who assume care for the children left

behind. Perhaps even more importantly, supports and resources for mothers must be understood as integral to any violence prevention strategy.

### **Majority of cases in First Nations and Inuit communities**

NWAC has gathered information about location of murder in 12 cases. Based on this information, we have found that the majority of murder cases in Quebec occurred on-reserve or in rural, predominately Inuit communities. This is very different from the national perspective; Canada-wide, 58% of women and girls were murdered in urban locations. In Quebec, only a small number of murder cases were found to occur in urban or rural areas.

NWAC has gathered information about place of disappearance for six cases. Of these, most of the women and girls were last seen in a First Nations community, followed by an urban location. Again, this is very different from the national situation, where over 70% of women and girls disappeared from an urban area and 12% went missing on-reserve.

### **A third 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.’

Of the 16 Quebec murder cases in NWAC’s database, 56% have been cleared by charges of homicide (first-degree murder, second-degree murder or manslaughter), compared to 53% nationally. 31% of cases in Quebec remain unsolved, versus 39% Canada-wide. A small number of cases in Quebec have been cleared by suicide or charges other than homicide (for example, a charge of assault).

### **Majority of deaths occurred in a residential dwelling**

NWAC has gathered information about the specific place of murder in 10 cases. Of these, the overwhelming majority—90%—took place in residence (either the woman’s home or another residential dwelling). This is much higher than the national average (59%).

### **Most deaths involve an intimate partner or family member**

NWAC’s research indicates that police and service providers in Quebec must make family violence a priority. Of the cases in Quebec where charges have been laid, more than half (54%) were found to involve a current or ex-partner or family member, compared to 28% nationally. The percentage of cases involving a family member is particularly high.

In contrast to other provinces, the information gathered to date suggests few cases of acquaintance or stranger violence in Quebec. It should be noted, however, that NWAC is still working to confirm the nature of relationship in several cases and our findings in this area might change with more information.

### **Majority of cases involve more than one police service (multiple jurisdictions)**

Policing in Quebec involves a variety of agencies: municipal police services, First Nations police services, the Sûreté du Québec (Quebec's provincial police force) and the Kativik Regional Police Force (in Nunavik).

To date, NWAC has gathered information about agency of jurisdiction in 12 cases. Half of these cases were found to involve multiple jurisdictions or joint operations between two or more police forces. The Sûreté du Québec was involved in the majority of cases as either a lead or a supporting agency

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 Quebec.

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<sup>1</sup>Much of the information in NWAC's database comes from secondary sources, particularly media stories, reported court decisions, and police websites. Unfortunately, our ability to carry out a comprehensive review of French-language sources has been constrained by a small number of bilingual staff. In addition, community members have questioned whether English-speaking families in Quebec are able to engage with French media—that language barriers may be impacting the full and accurate coverage of some cases.

*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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