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# Concentrating Investments to Prevent Violence Against Women

Holly Johnson & Jennifer Fraser

*Department of Criminology & Institute for the Prevention of Crime  
University of Ottawa*

## RÉSUMÉ

Le Groupe de travail national sur la prévention de la criminalité (2007) recommande la « concentration des investissements sur les besoins les plus importants » comme un élément essentiel d'une stratégie nationale efficace en prévention. Nous examinons ce que cela veut dire pour la prévention de la violence contre les femmes en adressant trois grands défis : maintenir un engagement politique de haut niveau à l'égard du problème; développer un consensus sur des indicateurs appropriés pour décrire le problème et évaluer le succès de nos interventions; et assurer l'accès aux données nécessaires et à l'expertise technique pour bien les utiliser. Nous considérons les avantages qu'une approche systématique d'intégration de l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes (*gender mainstreaming*) pourrait apporter au maintien d'un engagement politique d'inclure une perspective de genre dans les initiatives préventives. Nous examinons aussi les quelques recherches qui ont étudié les expériences violentes vécues par des femmes dans des contextes où cette violence n'a pas traditionnellement été étudiée. Pour l'instant, nos outils diagnostiques et de collecte de données ne semblent pas en mesure d'inclure ces expériences. Une vision plus large de la gamme d'expériences violentes vécues par les femmes doit être intégrée dans les stratégies canadiennes de collecte de données. Ceci nous permettrait d'améliorer notre capacité de décrire la nature et l'étendu de cette violence et d'évaluer l'efficacité de nos interventions.

## ABSTRACT

The National Working Group on Crime Prevention (2007) recommends “concentrating investments on the highest needs” as an essential element of a successful national crime prevention strategy for Canada. This article reflects on what this means for the prevention of violence against women by addressing three major challenges: sustaining high-level government commitment to preventing violence against women; achieving consensus on what constitutes appropriate indicators for measuring the nature and extent of the problem and evaluating success; and, ensuring access to relevant data and the technical expertise to use it effectively. We consider the benefits of gender mainstreaming for sustaining high-level commitment to including a gender perspective in violence prevention activities. We also profile research that examines women’s experiences of violence in contexts where it is not traditionally studied and conclude that traditional diagnostic and data collection tools are not adequate to the task. A broader vision of where and how girls and women experience violence needs to be integrated into data collection strategies in Canada. This would enhance our capacity to assess the nature and prevalence of this violence and the effectiveness of interventions.

## Introduction

Male violence against women has not fit easily within traditional crime prevention initiatives, most of which have tended to employ a gender-neutral perspective. Within analyses of gender-based violence, efforts to prevent male violence against women are often fragmented along two lines: intimate partner violence and women’s safety in public spaces (Shaw & Andrew, 2005). In addition, prevention of violence against women initiatives face many of the same challenges as traditional crime prevention policies and programs: while promising prevention approaches have been developed, most are implemented on an ad hoc basis and face problems of sustainability.

The National Working Group on Crime Prevention (NWG), sponsored by the Institute for the Prevention of Crime (IPC) at the University of Ottawa, identifies five key elements of a successful national crime prevention strategy for Canada (2007, p. 16-17):

1. Collaboration and problem-solving partnerships;
2. Concentrating investments on the highest needs;
3. Developing and sustaining community capacity;

4. Ensuring adequate and sustained supports and resources; and
5. Fostering public engagement.

This article will assess how the second of these elements, concentrating investments on the highest needs, can be accomplished in relation to the problem of violence against women. Table 1 lists the current situation, gaps, and recommendations outlined by the NWG (2007, p. 16-17) with respect to concentrating investments on groups or areas with the highest needs in crime prevention in general. The NWG makes a number of observations: successful prevention initiatives are not well-known; the nature of appropriate indicators for identifying crime problems continues to be debated; there are problems with access to data and to the diagnostic tools and data collection mechanisms required for targeting interventions and assessing progress; and, commitments to prevention initiatives often lose out to demands for resources for the operation of the criminal justice system. The NWG (2007) recommends that, in order to improve the capacity to concentrate investments on highest need areas and situations, we need clear and measurable indicators to serve as benchmarks for diagnoses and to assess the impacts of interventions, improved access to data, as well as the required training and technical assistance to make the best use of what is available.

In this article we reflect on what is meant by “concentrating investments on highest needs” when it comes to formulating, implementing, and sustaining initiatives to prevent male violence against women. We highlight some of the challenges of sustaining an interest in the prevention of violence against women, the difficulties related to achieving consensus on appropriate indicators for diagnosing problems and evaluating success, and major issues around access to the data needed to inform prevention efforts.

**Table 1: Concentrating investments on highest needs**

<b>Current situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) emphasis on evidence-led focused action;</li> <li>• Some important success stories;</li> <li>• Debates over appropriate indicators; and</li> <li>• Lack of required data.</li> </ul>
<b>Gaps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success stories not well-known;</li> <li>• Difficult to elicit a clear interest in prevention; and</li> <li>• Insufficient access to user-friendly data.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify clear and measurable indicators to serve as benchmarks for diagnoses and evaluations;</li> <li>• Assure user-friendly access to required data; and</li> <li>• Invest in training and technical assistance.</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from NWG (2007, p. 16-17).

## Sustaining a Commitment to Prevention

This section focuses on two major issues related to sustaining an interest in preventing violence against women: shifts in priority setting by various orders of government, and challenges to gender mainstreaming approaches. It also features an example of an academic/community partnership that has resulted in a sustainable violence prevention program for youth.

### Priority Setting

Canada's National Crime Prevention Centre (NCPC) was instituted in 1998 with a mandate to oversee the development and implementation of the National Crime Prevention Strategy. At this time, three priority areas were identified: youth, Aboriginal people, and violence against women. In 2007, with an annual budget of \$63 million, the NCPC refocused its work on four priority areas: (1) addressing early risk factors among vulnerable families and children and youth at risk; (2) responding to priority crime issues such as youth gangs and drug-related crime; (3) preventing recidivism among high risk groups; and (4) fostering prevention in Aboriginal communities (National Crime Prevention Centre, 2007).

Violence against women is no longer listed as a specific priority for the NCPC. However, a program can qualify for funding if it can be demonstrated that it fits within one of these four priorities areas, for example violence against women in Aboriginal communities, or is an intervention aimed at preventing reoffending in cases of intimate partner violence. In addition, eleven specific programs are favoured for significant funding by the NCPC over the next five years (NCPC, 2008):

1. Boys & Girls Club of Canada / Mentoring;
2. Police Athletic League;
3. Fast Track;
4. Stop Now and Plan;
5. Multisystemic Therapy;
6. Life Skills Training;
7. Leadership and Resiliency Program;
8. Youth Inclusion Program;
9. Quantum Opportunities Program;
10. Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care; and
11. Circles of Support and Accountability.

With this refocusing comes an emphasis on measureable results, project evaluations, and the development of a knowledge base on effective prevention practices that can be broadly disseminated (NCPC, 2007). This is an important role for a federal crime prevention agency, but the lack of specific commitment to funding for demonstration projects on violence against women is acutely felt, especially given the paucity of evaluations in this area in comparison to the numerous and extensive evaluations of programs aimed at preventing youth crime (Kruttschnitt, McLaughlin, & Petrie, 2004; Schewe, 2002).

At the provincial level, Alberta and Nova Scotia have recently established coordinated, multi-agency provincial crime prevention initiatives in which the problem of violence against women and strategies for preventing it and responding to victims are conceptualized quite differently. The terms of reference for the Alberta government's Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Task Force make no mention of gender as a vulnerability or risk factor for violence, and sexual assault is mentioned primarily in the context of the sexual exploitation of children (see Government of Alberta, 2007). After six months of public consultation, the Task Force made 31 recommendations. Included among them is the expansion of specialized domestic violence courts, the expansion of provincial support for programs aimed at preventing domestic violence, and providing support for families that are victims of domestic violence (Government of Alberta, 2007). While a commitment to providing additional support for families and prevention programs is certainly promising, it is a curious choice of phrasing to identify "families" and not women and children as the primary victims of domestic violence. In the \$468 million 3-year Safecom Action Plan established to respond to these recommendations, family violence is not listed among the 11 priority areas to be tackled first.<sup>1</sup>

Framing the issue as one of "domestic" or "family" violence suggests that violence is age- and gender-neutral and fails to acknowledge that women and children are those at greatest risk of physical and sexual violence in private settings and who suffer the most serious consequences (Johnson, 2006). Sexual violence, the most gendered of crimes, is not mentioned in the Alberta government's Action Plan, despite the fact that sexual violence affects almost 500,000 women in Canada and about 54,000 women in Alberta each year (Gannon & Mihorean, 2005). A strategy to end violence in women's lives must aim to address the gendered contexts in which this violence proliferates (Johnson, 2007). Experts argue that despite good evidence of the risk factors

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.justice.gov.ab.ca/downloads/documentloader.aspx?id=48560> for a chart of the recommendations and priorities.

for violence and the social contexts in which violence occurs, the major underlying causes of male violence against women, such as the abuse of power and gender inequality, remain poorly understood by the public and are seldom effectively addressed in prevention efforts (Wolfe & Jaffe, 2001, p. 283). This situation is made worse when government funding bodies fail to accurately identify the nature of the problem and to link causes to appropriate solutions.

In 2006, in response to concerns about rising violent crime and youth crime, the Minister of Justice of Nova Scotia created the Task Force on Safer Streets and Communities. Its mandate was to identify best practices and ways to support communities in their efforts to address conditions that contribute to crime (Government of Nova Scotia, 2007). Although violence against women was not listed among the 18 priority areas for action in the Task Force report, the government response specifically identified the importance of raising awareness and changing attitudes and misconceptions about family violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence against women. The government report also recommends counselling for children who witness family violence; enhanced support for victims of family violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault to help prevent re-victimization; annual training for justice officials responding to family violence; and, improved coordination of services in domestic violence cases.

Government initiatives like these play an important leadership role in terms of facilitating coordination among sectors and allocating resources to community groups and agencies working to prevent crime and improve community safety. However, priority setting by national and provincial crime prevention initiatives serves an equally important symbolic function. By identifying certain groups or crime problems as priorities, governments use their authority to construct some social problems as more worthy of attention than others. One example is the way in which combating youth crime involving guns and gangs has become a priority for the federal government, despite the fact that this problem is concentrated within a few specific communities and geographic areas, in contrast to intimate partner and sexual violence which affect large numbers of mainly women and children throughout the broader population. Women's groups and community agencies continue to struggle to sustain a commitment to keeping the prevention of violence against women on the public policy agenda.

Despite these ongoing challenges, there have been some successes. One notable initiative in Canada is *The Fourth R*, an anti-violence program for youth that evolved out of academic/community partnerships within the University of

Western Ontario and the Thames Valley School Board in London, Ontario. Though the program was developed through funding from various federal and Ontario government agencies and is housed in the Centre for Prevention Science of the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH), the expansion of *The Fourth R* to sites across Canada has been largely privately funded by the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation and a philanthropic family (Crooks, Wolfe, Hughes, Jaffe, & Chiodo, 2008).

A rigorous evaluation of *The Fourth R* indicates that early intervention in high school settings through curriculum-based programming can have a positive impact on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of adolescents concerning sexual and relationship violence (Crooks et al., 2008). Unlike many other prevention efforts that involve short-term or one-time interactions with young people in school settings, the key to the sustainability of *The Fourth R* is the curriculum-based nature of the program and the provision of training and pedagogical materials to teachers who deliver the program. As a result of the growing awareness and support for this program among high school teachers and administrators, *The Fourth R* has been integrated into the curriculum in more than 350 schools in Ontario and in schools in six other Canadian provinces (Crooks et al., 2008).

### **Gender Mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming is one approach to sustaining efforts to prevent violence against women over the longer term; is designed to institutionalize gender concerns and to incorporate the safety and security of women into government policies and programs (Moser, 2008). British researcher Caroline Moser (2008) illustrates how the use of a gender mainstreaming approach at the local level provides a useful lens for examining how different types of crimes are interrelated and how gender intersects with other social disparities, such as those based on ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation. Gender mainstreaming was established by the *1995 Beijing Platform for Action* as the major global strategy for achieving gender equality and empowering women (United Nations, 1995). It is defined by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations as “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action...so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated” (UN Economic and Social Council, 1997). Other definitions also incorporate gender equality in staffing, women's participation in decision-making processes, and specific activities to empower women (Moser, 2008).

Montreal has been a world leader in municipal action to prevent violence against women through the work of the *Comité d'action femmes et sécurité urbaine* (CAFSU – Women and Urban Safety Action Committee) which was formed in 1992 to focus on violence against women in public spaces, primarily through public awareness campaigns and safety audits. Also during this time, the city's crime prevention program, Tandem Montreal, extended its mandate to include a women's safety component (Michaud & Chappaz, 2002). The network Women in Cities International (WICI – Femmes et villes) developed out of the work of CAFSU to facilitate the exchange of information and provide advice to governments on gender issues and gender mainstreaming in the governance of cities. Since its inception, WICI has undertaken a number of activities to encourage gender equality in municipal governments and has developed nine key organizing themes on women's safety. These incorporate the use of a gender-based approach, conducting safety audits and safety planning from a woman's perspective, using research, and sharing good practices.<sup>2</sup>

In 2002, CAFSU and WICI released a report that encourages municipal governments to move away from a paternalistic/dependence to an empowerment/autonomy approach to women's safety. Such an approach places women as the central point of reference for community safety issues, and is part of a comprehensive model that relies on communication with stakeholders, research and policy, safety planning and design, and community mobilization (Michaud & Chappaz, 2002). Also in 2002, the *Montreal Declaration on Women's Safety* identified good local governance using a gendered approach as a key component to ensuring women's safety. In collaboration with other partners, WICI has also produced publications to guide local action on addressing women's safety concerns, on conducting safety audits, and on achieving gender equality through equal representation in municipal governments and decision making. An online exchange forum with women's groups from five continents in 2006 resulted in a number of key elements for ensuring gender mainstreaming in local governance (Michaud, 2007).

Finally, WICI is currently helping to build partnerships between local women's groups and their municipalities and to implement safety approaches that focus on marginalized women. With funding from Status of Women Canada, this project aims to provide training for the development and implementation of safety audits in four Canadian cities (Montreal, Gatineau, Peel, and Regina) with a focus on Aboriginal women, elderly women, immigrant and minority

women, and women with disabilities. WICI is also undertaking a comparative study of safety audits, funded by the UN Safer Cities program.

Another example of a Canadian city that has made steps to promote safety in public spaces is Saskatoon. In 2008, Saskatoon embedded Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) into all city planning. Their Neighbourhood Safety Program uses a local area planning process to facilitate the participation of community members and stakeholders in the future of their own communities (Janhevich, Johnson, Vézina, & Fraser, 2008). While not explicitly targeting women's safety concerns, the mainstreaming of CPTED into the city's development plan could achieve positive results for the safety of women in public spaces.

Although these practices are encouraging, Moser (2008) cautions that gender mainstreaming has been largely unsuccessful in achieving gender equality because of failures of implementation, failure to follow through with good intentions, and political opposition based on gendered power relations.

### Selecting Appropriate Indicators

The NWG (2007) argues that clear and measurable indicators are needed to serve as benchmarks for diagnosing crime problems and for evaluating programs and policies, and that a lack of consensus concerning the nature of appropriate indicators has hindered progress in a number of areas. A related question pertains to how we measure success of violence prevention efforts. The ultimate goal of programs and initiatives designed to address violence against women is a reduction in violence, but by what measure? Should success be assessed only by measurable reductions in violent behaviour? If so, by what means and at what cost? In this section, we consider how new research about the manifestations of violence against women has revealed gaps in traditional indicators for problem identification and indicators of success for prevention efforts.

The lack of consensus concerning the nature of appropriate indicators may pose a greater challenge to designing and sustaining initiatives to prevent violence against women than is the case for most other types of crime. Feminist researchers contend that ambiguities concerning the nature of sexual and intimate partner violence and the impact on victims, and the reluctance to acknowledge the very high incidence of male violence against women, continue to seriously undermine efforts to prevent and react effectively to these crimes (Kelly & Radford, 1996). It is well documented that substantial proportions

<sup>2</sup> For more information on WICI and the initiatives mentioned in this article, visit [http://www.womenincities.org/english/sets\\_en/set\\_bienvenue\\_en.htm](http://www.womenincities.org/english/sets_en/set_bienvenue_en.htm)

of women in Canada and around the world experience violence and threats of violence in the form of sexual harassment, sexual assault, physical assault, stalking, and homicide (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005; Johnson, 1996). These acts of violence are not mutually exclusive and are perpetrated by male intimate partners, acquaintances, family members, and strangers with varying degrees of severity. Widespread beliefs that women are to some extent to blame for this violence make it difficult to achieve agreement on appropriate indicators for analyzing the manifestations and extent of the problem (Johnson, 2007). As a result, the process of designing appropriate diagnostic tools and data collection mechanisms for monitoring progress in preventing violence against women is still in its infancy.

Despite slow progress in this area, Canada is recognized as a world leader in developing ways to interview women about violence that yield reliable and valid statistical data about women's experiences, the consequences of violence for them, and their decisions to use criminal justice and social services (Johnson, Ollus, & Nevala, 2008, p. 13). In 1993, Statistics Canada conducted the first national survey dedicated to interviewing a random sample of women about their experiences of physical and sexual violence and sexual harassment (Johnson & Sacco, 1995). Modules of questions on spousal violence and stalking have been adapted to the ongoing *General Social Survey (GSS) on Victimization* which provides estimates of a wide range of crimes on a five year cycle, as well as a limited number of risk factors. However, the depth and breadth of questions on sexual assault have been reduced considerably from the 1993 survey, and sexual harassment has been eliminated entirely. While rates of spousal violence are calculated to cover a five-year period and are available at the national and provincial/territorial levels, rates of sexual assault are calculated for a one-year period and are available at the national level only.

The telephone methodology used to interview women directly about their experiences of violence is cost-effective and produces good general coverage in countries with broad telephone ownership, but it is not without important limitations. Surveys conducted by telephone effectively exclude marginalized populations living in shelters, unstable housing, or on the street; those who cannot respond in English or French; and, cultural and linguistic minorities for whom telephone surveys are not a familiar medium for disclosing personal or sensitive experiences. In addition, there is no guarantee that the general risk indicators produced at the national aggregate level apply universally to excluded individuals. For example, one Australian study found that attitudes toward intimate partner and sexual violence varied according to the gender

and ethnicity of respondents (Taylor & Mouzos, 2006). In Canada, there is a lack of understanding and adequate data about the cultural specificities related to women's experiences of violence, particularly about the way in which discrimination and oppression based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and level of ability intersect to affect these experiences and their impacts.

Coupled with the ambiguity that often surrounds beliefs about what constitutes harmful acts of violence against women is a limited understanding of where such violence occurs, who the perpetrators are, and who the victims are. Researchers who apply a gender analysis to forms of crime not typically considered under the banner of violence against women, such as street-level violence and gang violence, have discovered important links to various forms of violence against women. Mark Totten (2000) conducted in-depth interviews with marginal street-involved male youth in Ottawa in an attempt to understand their violent behaviour toward girlfriends. These young men made sense of their behaviour by subscribing to rigid patriarchal beliefs about men and women, and rationalized their violence as a legitimate way to control "their" women when they stepped outside stereotypical gender roles. These youth possessed limited means through which to construct a sense of masculinity; violence was one way they could construct an identity as a "real man" and escape the oppression of a disadvantaged life with poor prospects for the future. The socialization of these youth occurred through many different means (e.g., media, military, sports, and peer groups), the majority had been abused by a father figure (80%), and a substantial proportion had been encouraged by a father figure to abuse women (43%). Additionally, all of the youth reported engaging in other criminal activity and substance abuse, most on a daily basis.

Jody Miller (2008) examined how the structural inequalities that form racialized urban spaces of poverty affect young women's experiences of violence. Through in-depth interviews with 75 young African American men and women in disadvantaged St. Louis neighbourhoods rife with gang violence, criminal activity, and low collective efficacy, Miller (2008) provides a convincing argument for broadening the conceptualization of violence against women. Eighty-nine percent of young black women in her sample had experienced either sexual or gender harassment<sup>3</sup>, 61% had experienced physical violence in a dating relationship, and 54% had experienced some form of sexual

<sup>3</sup> Sexual harassment encompasses verbal, physical, and visual forms of unwanted sexual attention, including sexual comments, touching, or public exhibition of pornography. Gender harassment refers to behaviours that degrade or are insulting to women (Miller, 2008).

victimization<sup>4</sup> (Miller 2008). This violence cannot be fully understood without considering the dynamics of male-female relationships in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods. Miller (2008) proposes that gendered violence is perpetrated because it is culturally supported; historical and continuing racial oppression limits men's access to legitimate means for constructing masculinity which then leads to the adoption of a street reputation, based on the "cool pose"<sup>5</sup> and its associated violence. This violence is central to the identities of these young men and so they minimize the harm done to women by characterizing violence as "play", engaging in victim-blaming, and defining violence in very narrow terms (Miller, 2008).

In her work with young men in Columbia, Moser (2008) challenges traditional thinking in which domestic violence and street violence are approached as separate issues and demonstrates how intra-familial violence and urban violence are intricately linked. Not only do witnessing and directly experiencing domestic violence raise the risk of perpetration of violence among young men, but Moser (2008) describes how a lack of safety in violent homes helps to propel young men out of the house and onto the streets where they join gangs, turn to drugs, and become involved in robbery, attacks, and other crime. These groups of aggressive young men on the street have a negative impact on public safety, social cohesion, and social capital in the neighbourhood. Unless a gender analysis is applied to these interrelated problems, the situation is often misinterpreted as one solely of public safety, and responses formulated to address the problem fail to take into account women's safety in the home and in public spaces.

These studies should not be interpreted to suggest that gendered violence is only perpetrated in disadvantaged social spaces, but that factors like class and race influence the dynamics of the perpetration of violence against women. These and other studies demonstrate how, by employing a gender analysis to the priority problem of youth violence – typically considered a problem of young men posing a threat to public safety – new information comes to light that has the potential to elevate women's safety concerns on public agendas by illuminating the risks they face when interacting with these young men. This violence is unlikely to be recorded in police statistics, victimization surveys, or other common methods of problem identification in crime prevention. In order to be able to select indicators that are appropriate for accurately identifying

<sup>4</sup> Sexual victimization includes rape, attempted rape, gang rape, or pressured or coerced sex (Miller, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> The "cool pose" is a mask to conceal vulnerabilities that is characterized by control of emotions, aloofness, toughness, and detachment for many black males (Majors & Billson, 1993; Miller, 2008).

problems and measuring success, we must expand our knowledge of how and where these problems occur.

While sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence are experienced by women of all socioeconomic statuses, ages, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and levels of ability, all women do not experience violence equally. The concept of "intersectionality" (Crenshaw, 1994) refers to the intersections of power (e.g., based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation) and oppression (e.g., prejudice, class stratification, gender inequality, heterosexist bias) that are thought of as key explanatory factors, rather than risk factors for violence (Bogard, 2005). A relevant Canadian example is the systemic victimization of Aboriginal women rooted in the historical process of segregating Aboriginal children from their families and communities in residential schools, where they were meant to unlearn their Aboriginal cultures in poor living conditions rife with psychological, physical, and sexual abuse (see Backhouse, 2008; McGillivray & Comaskey, 1999; Monture-Angus, 1995 and 1999). This practice has contributed to the extremely high rates of sexual and intimate partner violence against Aboriginal women in Canada today (Johnson, 2006).

Totten (2000), Miller (2008), and Moser (2008) illustrate how violence against women is manifested in situations where youth criminality and gang violence proliferate. These studies show that gendered violence can be observed by looking in the spaces where it is generally not considered to be the major problem. They also indicate that diagnostic tools and data collection mechanisms used to assess the nature and extent of male violence against women must take into account the vast range of situations and contexts in which this violence occurs. Moser (2008) highlights the benefits of a "violence roadmap" approach which entails conducting a detailed gender analysis of violence and insecurity in the local area and identifying interconnections among them so that policymakers can identify appropriate solutions. This approach can help categorize manifestations of gender-based violence in contexts where it has not been identified as the primary concern. Diagnoses that focus solely on methods traditionally employed for problem identification will fail to adequately capture the range of women's experiences of male violence and subsequently limit the range of strategies designed to address it.

### Access to Data

The NWG (2007) recommends that, in order to improve our capacity to target problems and concentrate resources more effectively, it is important to ensure



user-friendly access to relevant data and to provide sufficient training and technical assistance to those responsible for using this data. In this section, we discuss some of the issues related to using traditional research methodologies to study violence against women and explore some options for using new technologies and accessing untapped data sources to expand our knowledge in this area.

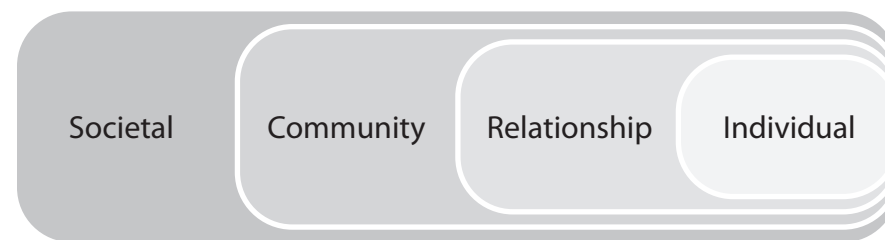
The World Health Organization (WHO) finds it useful to conceptualize the interplay of risk factors for violence in an ecological model (see Figure 1). This model can be used to illustrate how intimate partner violence and sexual assault are influenced by factors at four separated but interconnected levels:

1. The individual level (e.g., history of witnessing or experiencing violence, substance abuse);
2. In relationships with others (e.g., peer support, patriarchal domestic relationships);
3. In the community (e.g., concentrated poverty, norms supportive of violence); and,
4. Within society (e.g., social norms supportive of traditional gender roles, economic and gender inequality, tolerance for violence).

This ecological model suggests that prevention programs and strategies need to target all four of these levels, and that relevant and appropriate data will be required in order to concentrate our efforts and assess their impact. There is a dearth of outcome evaluations for the prevention of violence against women, and most available evaluations focus on process and implementation of programs targeted at the individual or relationship level. Much less evaluative work has been conducted on interventions aimed at the community or societal level. Clear evaluation methodologies are needed from the onset of program implementation, in addition to a wide range of data for evaluating the effectiveness of prevention programs and strategies targeted at all levels (Barchechat & Sansfaçon, 2003).

The ecological model is useful for conceptualizing interconnections among risk factors for violence at a general level, but the data required to diagnose the nature of violence against women in specific communities, or to assess the effectiveness of programs aimed at targeting these risk factors and correlates only exists in a limited and patchwork fashion. For example, in Canada, data from the *General Social Survey on Victimization* provide estimates at the national level (and to a limited extent provincial and territorial levels) of the prevalence of intimate partner violence and sexual assault and a very general

**Figure 1: WHO Ecological Model of the Risk Factors for Violence**



Source: Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano (2002).

indication of individual-and relationship-level correlates. Despite very large samples and sophisticated methodologies, national surveys cannot provide estimates of the prevalence or manifestation of crime problems at the level of municipalities or neighbourhoods. In addition, there is little or no information available about the community or societal level factors that help perpetuate such violence, such as attitudes and social norms supportive of violence.

It is also unrealistic to expect municipalities and local communities to have the capacity and resources to conduct such surveys at the local level, particularly when national and provincial agendas do not consistently prioritize violence against women in their decisions on funding. Surveys on violence against women have not been conducted at the city level in Canada since the late 1980s and early 1990s (Randall & Haskell, 1995; Smith, 1990) and are very rarely conducted at the local level (e.g., Hamner & Saunders, 1984 in Leeds, UK for example). While reference manuals are available to assist municipalities in conducting audits to identify crime and safety problems (European Forum for Urban Safety, 2007), the technical expertise required to gather and analyze detailed survey data is not likely to be readily available among municipal personnel, nor are the financial resources likely to be available in municipal budgets. There are also concerns that specialized surveys that interview women about their experiences of violence should not be undertaken without appropriate measures to ensure the safety of survey respondents and interviewers (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005).

The NWG (2007) contends that regular victimization surveys are needed to uncover unreported crime and assess the effectiveness of interventions. But even these may not be sufficiently reliable to measure changes in the prevalence of violence against women accurately, given the reticence of women to disclose personal experiences. This reflects a number of factors, including fear of retaliation from violent partners; social norms that can affect disclosure; and, language, cultural, and religious barriers (Johnson et al., 2008).

One alternative might be to use indirect or proxy measures. For example, positive changes in knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about sexual and intimate partner violence, improvements to criminal justice policies and processes, or changes in community and societal responses are useful indicators of progress in this area. Other plausible measures of progress include growth in the number of available services, improvements in training for police and prosecutors, increased budgets and funding, an increase in referrals among police and community agencies, an increase in interventions with children exposed to intimate partner violence, or a positive change in public awareness of the problem. The relative benefits of these as high level indicators of societal change in addressing male violence against women continue to be debated at the international level (UNODC, 2007; Walby, 2007). A case can be made for including each of these in indicators of progress in responding to and preventing violence against women, but the data needed for many of them remain either unavailable or difficult to access.

British researchers Maddy Coy, Liz Kelly, and Jo Foord (2007) are working within a coalition of organizations in the United Kingdom called End Violence Against Women (EVAW), which has prevention as a central goal. They mapped geographically the violence against women services available in the UK and concluded that women face a “postcode lottery” in their access to support services. This technique revealed that one-third of local government regions in the UK have no specialized support services to respond to female victims of violence. Most of the existing services address intimate partner violence, few services are geared to helping victims of sexual assault, and very few services are available specifically for ethnic minority women. The maps are useful for illustrating how resources are concentrated in major cities and for identifying areas that are particularly underserved. Because violence against women can result in severe physical and mental health consequences for victims, and because women tend to use multiple services, access to an array of medical and social services is integral to their recovery. Support services are also important for the public awareness and outreach prevention work they do in the local community. The authors note that the lack of services is particularly acute in England and Wales where local authorities are not guided by national strategies on service provision for violence against women, in contrast to Scotland where a commitment to ending violence against women has been made by the national government. This research is an excellent example of how new technologies can be used to assess progress in responding to violence against women, and it illustrates how important national governments are in providing a vision for preventing and responding to violence against women that affects service delivery at the local level.

As part of the Take Care New York agenda, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) brought together multiple data sources to further understand the problem of intimate partner violence for women in that city. Police statistics describing homicides of women and those from the DOHMH’s Female Homicide Surveillance System were tracked along with trends in female emergency room visits, assault hospitalizations, and data from three population based surveys: the annual Community Health Survey (that includes a question on fear of intimate partner violence), the biannual Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (that asks a question about physical violence in teen dating relationships), and the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (that follows up with every woman who delivers a baby in NYC about her pregnancy experience, including intimate partner violence). The data indicate that the prevalence of teen dating violence for females has risen from 7.1% to 10.6% in the last 10 years; women in their 20s, black and Hispanic women, and women living in low income neighbourhoods are most likely to be killed by an intimate partner; and, emergency room visits for female victims of assault are on the rise<sup>6</sup> (Stayton et al., 2008).

The use of new technologies and multiple data sources can help uncover some of the hidden nature of men’s violence against women. The “map of gaps” in the UK uses geographic technology to examine government and community responses to violence against women in an innovative way. The NYC study demonstrates the importance of combining questions about various forms of violence against women with ongoing survey instruments. It also illustrates that, with proper screening tools and documentation processes for doctors and nurses, health care data sources provide valuable information concerning the severity and frequency of intimate partner violence among women who seek medical services but who may not contact social or criminal justice services. These projects highlight the potential of combining the perspectives and data of a variety of disciplines to acquire a multi-dimensional view of the problem of men’s violence against women.

## Conclusion

What does it mean, then, to concentrate investments on highest needs with respect to preventing violence against women? It means having the ability to accurately identify the nature of the problem, where these problems are most acute, who is affected, and what interventions are most appropriate. This

<sup>6</sup> An increase in emergency room visits may not necessarily reflect an increase in assaults, but can also be attributed to an overall increase in emergency department utilization or improved documentation (Stayton et al., 2008).

requires access to a wide range of good information, the skills to analyze it, and the knowledge to put it into practice in a way that will have a positive impact on those most affected. All of this requires a clear and sustained commitment to tackling the issue from national, provincial/territorial, and municipal governments.

The research literature provides examples of the benefits and new insights that can be gained when a gendered analysis is applied to crime problems. Studies have highlighted how violence against women is manifested in spaces defined by street crime or gang violence, an aspect not often considered in analyses of these phenomena. A broader vision of where and how girls and women experience violence needs to be integrated into data collection strategies in Canada so that our choice of indicators to assess the prevalence and nature of this violence, and the availability of data to assess the effectiveness of interventions, is enhanced. There is a need to expand the available array of data to include health and other service sector data, to incorporate new technologies such as geographic mapping, and to form partnerships with stakeholders in these and other disciplines. Finally, there is a need to apply tested methodologies and to develop new methodologies for studying key sub-populations of women, for example new immigrants, street youth, or girls in schools, in order to disaggregate some of their unique experiences of victimization from national aggregate data. Overall, a commitment to concentrate investments requires a more complete accounting for the complexities of women's experiences of male violence on which to develop, implement, and sustain prevention initiatives.

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