



T | 604.872.8212 F | 604.876.8450 E | info@rapereliefshelter.bc.ca

www.rapereliefshelter.bc.ca

Who We Are

Vancouver Rape Relief & Women's Shelter (VRRWS) operates Canada's oldest Rape Crisis Centre and a transition house for women and their children, opening in 1973. We are active in responding to women who have experienced any form of sexist attack on the continuum of male violence, whether recent or historic, some of which are: rape, battery, incest, prostitution, and sexual harassment. The collective is diverse in terms of race, age and class backgrounds. The majority of VRRWS members are women who have experienced some form of male violence in their lives. VRRWS's knowledge and authority on male violence against women is derived from responding to 1,200 women annually who call for assistance.

Femicide in Canada

In 2023, 205 women and girls were victims of homicide in Canada.¹ Of the solved homicides, almost three quarters (72%) were killed by a male intimate partner or a male family member.²

In some domestic femicides, in particular when the accused killed himself after murdering his victim and no charges were laid, police will not share any information on the case including names of the female victims or male suspects nor on the nature of their relationship.³ Sometimes police describe the case as an "isolated incident" stating that "there is no risk to the public" or that the man that was arrested was known to the victim, yet won't explicitly state that the accused was the woman's partner.⁴ As Tara Graham, daughter of recent femicide victim Brenda Tatlock-Burke, put it: "The initial communication was it wasn't labelled as domestic abuse. It was simply just said that they were known to each other and there was no harm to the community. I just felt that was so insulting to her and to the community, because people aren't just safe, and she didn't just have a fight that went sideways. This was a long, drawn-out domestic abuse relationship that ended very tragically."⁵

Our organization works to counter the fragmentation and lack of visibility afforded to victims of femicide by holding an annual community vigil. We publicly mourn the women whose lives were violently stolen from them and aim to educate Canadians about the crisis of femicide and male violence against women that continues to claim numerous women's lives, year after year.⁶

¹ Statistics Canada, [Table 35-10-0156-01 Number, percentage and rate of homicide victims, by gender and Indigenous identity](#), July 25, 2024

² Statistics Canada, [Gender-related homicide of women and girls in Canada](#), April 5, 2023

³ Surrey Now-Leader, [Vigil mourners want police to shed light on Surrey woman's death](#), Dec 29, 2023

⁴ Global News, [Woman killed at home in Abbotsford, B.C., police arrest man at scene](#), March 16, 2024

⁵ Global News, [Woman's family wants it known her death by ex-RCMP officer was intimate partner violence](#), Nov 7, 2024

⁶ Vancouver Rape Relief, [Vigil mourning victims of femicide in British Columbia in 2023](#), December 27, 2024



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By monitoring cases of domestic femicide committed in our province, British Columbia, by men whose names were released by police, we were able to trace court records showing that many of these men were arrested and charged in the past for committing violence against their female partners but were released until their trial with conditions that didn't prevent them from murdering their women victims.⁷ Based on frequent media reports, this is the case across Canada.⁸

Routinely, men that are deemed dangerous by Crown prosecutors and judges, as evident by the granting of protection orders for their victims and no-contact as a bail condition, are released without proper supervision and fatally harm women.⁹ This underscores the preventability of femicide and the urgency for changes to this system.

Recommendations

1. Inform the public in a timely manner of any case where a man kills his female partner using an explicit statement made by local police or provincial coroners (excluding victims' names when their family asks for protection of the privacy of the victim or her children).
2. Advise provincial coroners to publish comprehensive annual reports with the findings of each domestic femicide inquiry, including gaps and failures in systems and services that could have intervened to reduce the risk and protect the victim.
3. Create effective mechanisms to monitor and supervise the whereabouts of men charged with uttering threats against or assaulting their female partner. Advise Crown prosecutors and judges that if measures as such are not in place, men who pose risk to women are to be held in custody until the completion of justice proceedings.

⁷ Hilla Kerner, [When it comes to domestic femicide, women deserve real protection](#), *Vancouver Is Awesome*, Jan 12, 2023

⁸ Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter, [Domestic Femicide Foreseen: Media Roundup](#), September 5, 2024

⁹ Vancouver Rape Relief's [letter to BC Premier and AG](#) on the tragic murder of Tori Dunn and other cases of femicide in British Columbia, July 24, 2024