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**Child Victims of Federally  
Sentenced Offenders: A Profile of  
Victims and Perpetrators**

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**Child Victims of Federally Sentenced Offenders: A Profile of Victims and Perpetrators**

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## Executive Summary

**Key words:** *child victims, profile, victimization, victim services.*

Data surrounding the types of crimes that occur against children, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and the impact of the crimes on the victims' health and development, particularly among child victims, are not routinely collected and are poorly understood. The primary purpose of this study, therefore, was to gain further insight into: 1) the characteristics of a population of federal offenders who have committed a crime against a child, and 2) the characteristics of child victims identified from a random sample of these offenders.

Federally sentenced men and women offenders who have ever had a child victim on the current or a previous sentence, and who were under the jurisdiction of the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) at the time of data extraction were included in the study. This resulted in a total population of 3518 offenders (103 women and 3415 men), ranging in age from 17 to 91 years of age. The majority of this population were White (60.6%); 26.5% self-identified as Aboriginal, and 6.6% self-identified as Black.

We found that over half of the population of offenders who had committed a crime against a child were incarcerated for a sexual crime and had an average sentence length of about 4 years. A sample of 488 offenders from this population was randomly selected for an in-depth file review to obtain further information on offenders' victims and the offenders' own personal victimization experiences. A total of 1665 victims (child and adult) of offenders who had at least one crime against a child were identified. The victims' average age was 11.4 years at the time of the victimization. The number of victims per offender identified through file review, ranged from 1 to 87, with a mean of 11.8. At least 43% of the offenders in the sample themselves had histories of being abused as a child, most frequently by their parents.

The crimes most often perpetrated against the child victims of these federal offenders were sexual although about one-third of the victims experienced some form of nonsexual violence. Most perpetrators were known to the victims (71% of the cases), counter to the common perception that strangers are mostly responsible for these crimes. Victims experienced a range of negative psychological and physical consequences as a result of the crimes committed against them. Compared to child victims who were not registered with the National Victim Service Program (NVSP) at CSC, those who were registered were more likely to have been victimized by a parental figure, more often the victimization took the form either of an abuse of power, position or authority, or assault with a weapon, and they were more likely to be victims of offences of a sexual nature.

Child victims are a vulnerable group in need of support and protection. Incomplete information documenting the offences committed against them and their impact has hampered research and limited understanding in this area. More systematic documentation on individuals who are victims of crime will allow for appropriate service delivery that addresses their specific needs.

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## **Introduction**

Victimization is a real consequence of all types of crime, and can result in physical and psychological harm. Although property crimes are more prevalent than violent crime (Statistics Canada, 2014) the harm to victims of violent crime is often more serious (Cohen, Berliner, & Mannarino, 2003) and warrants further study. While estimates of the rates of crime against children and youth are available, precise rates are illusive due to under-reporting. A recently released report on trends in criminal victimization reported to police from 1999 to 2009 claims that only one-third of victimization incidents are reported (Sinha, 2015).

While they may not capture all incidents of crime, police-reported crime rates do provide important information. For example, in Canada in 2013, 4, 232 sexual violations against children were reported to police, a rate of 12 per 100, 000 of the total population (Boyce, Cotter, & Perrault, 2014). Further, police-reported crime rates provide an idea of the profile of those who are being victimized, and where these crimes are committed. In 2008, an analysis of police reported cases in Canada identified just over 75,000 victimized children, with Saskatchewan and Manitoba having the highest rates of violent child victimization (2,136 and 1,710 per 100,000 respectively; Ogordnik, 2008). For many of these individuals, the consequences are serious and their lives may be profoundly affected (Lanning, 2010).

As part of the spectrum of services available to victims in Canada, Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) provides services to victims of federal offenders through their National Victim Services Program (NVSP). Currently, there is limited data beyond reported crime rates available on child victims of federal offenders. The types of crimes that occur (e.g., violent, sexual), the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim (e.g., familial versus stranger), and the impact on the child's development (e.g., mental health) are not well understood.

### **Child Victims of Crime**

Physical assault is the most common form of violent crime experienced by children (e.g., Finkelhor, 2007; Finkelhor & Shattuck, 2012; Ogrodnik, 2008). This crime typically involves the use of deliberate and unreasonable force against any part of a child's body and can range from pushing or face-to-face verbal threats, to disfiguring or endangering another person's life (Ogrodnik, 2008). Sexual assault is the second most common violent crime committed against

children reported to police (Ogordnik, 2008). This can range from sexual comments, to attempted penetration, or full penetration to satisfy sexual gratification (Department of Justice Canada, 2012). According to Sinha (2013), sexual assaults involving minor, or no, physical injury, are the most common form of sexual abuse perpetrated against children. Recently there is evidence that child pornography has increased by approximately 13% between 2010 and 2012 (Boyce, Cotter & Perrault, 2014).

**The impact of victimization.** Victims of crime may experience emotional, physical, and/or psychological problems, either immediately, or after a period of time (Norman, Byambaa, De, Butchart, Scott, & Vos, 2012). The impact can differ depending on factors such as the victim's age and developmental status at the time of the event, the type, frequency, duration, and severity of abuse, as well as the relationship between the child and the perpetrator (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014).

Research studying the ability of victims to cope with negative life events has provided some insight into the recovery process. A victim's ability to cope with an adverse event such as child abuse can be influenced by protective factors (i.e., attributes or characteristics within the individual, the family, and the community supports that help individuals cope with, or overcome, stressful or traumatic events; Werner, 2005). Alternatively, risk factors (i.e., stressful conditions, events, or circumstances) can increase the likelihood of poor outcomes (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014). Resilience is defined as the ability of an individual to experience an adverse situation without serious personal consequences. Some resilience factors identified in the literature are skills, personal characteristics, knowledge, and relationships that offset exposure to risk (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014). A better understanding of the impact of victimization and the circumstances of the offence (e.g., relationship of the victim to the perpetrator, type of victimization) can provide further insight into exposure to risk and determine what strengths can be built upon to influence coping and resiliency processes.

**Relationship to perpetrator.** A common misconception among the general public is that perpetrators of crime involving children are most often strangers. In fact, research has shown that children are most often victims of individuals known to them (Lanning, 2010). According to Sinha's research (2013), just over half of crimes involving children are committed by an acquaintance, a family friend or group leader, and about 26% of perpetrators are family

members. Further, research has also shown that there are differences across gender and age of the victim when considering type of abuse and relationship with the perpetrator. Specifically, girls are four times more likely than boys to be sexually victimized by a family member and boys are one and a half times more likely to be physically abused by family members (Sinha, 2013). While younger children are more likely to be victimized by a family member, by the age of nine, children are more likely to be victimized by an acquaintance due to their increased independence and participation in activities outside of the home (Sinha, 2013).

Regardless of the type of victimization or by whom the crime was perpetrated, the experience of being victimized results in some level of harm to victims and can leave them, as well as those who care for them, in need of assistance in understanding what has happened and in gaining access to available services designed to address the immediate and ongoing impact. As members of a vulnerable population, understanding the needs of child victims of crime can help agencies better identify, reach out to, and provide effective services that will appropriately meet their needs. To achieve this, researchers and front line staff require a better understanding of the children that have been harmed and the offenders who have harmed them.

### **Purpose of the Present Study**

The purpose of the present study was two-fold; to examine both characteristics of child victims of crime, as well as the perpetrators of these offences. With respect to the victims, the study built on previous research that examined a sample of 6,692 child victims and victims of domestic violence registered with the CSC Victim's Services Branch in 2010 (see Gobeil, Barnum, & Euch, 2012). In the present study, a sample of child victims of federally sentenced offenders were examined to understand the types of crimes committed against them, victimization methods used, and the physical and psychological harm caused by the crimes. Whereas the previous study included only victims registered with the Victim's Services Branch, the current research identified both registered and non-registered victims by coding a random sample of cases from the population of offenders who have ever committed a crime against a child. This study aimed to respond to the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of a population of federal offenders who have committed a crime against a child, including demographic information, offence and sentencing information, and personal victimization experiences?

2. What are the characteristics of the child victims identified from a random sample of the population of federal offenders who have committed a crime against a child?

Specifically, what are the type of offences committed against the children, the victimization methods used (e.g., abuse of power and authority, violence, weapons), and what was the physical and psychological harm caused?

## Method

### Participants

Offenders were identified using the Offender Management System (OMS), an electronic database containing offender file information from intake until warrant expiry. Federally sentenced men and women offenders who have ever had a child victim (on the current or a previous sentence) and who were under the jurisdiction of the CSC at the time of data extraction were identified from Offender Intake Assessment (OIA)<sup>1</sup> indicators that document this information<sup>2</sup>. This resulted in a total of 3518 (103 women and 3415 men) offenders whose first admission to CSC spanned from 1969 to April 2014.

At the time of admission, the offenders' age ranged from 17 to 91 years ( $M = 40.1$ ,  $SD = 14.0$ ). As reported in Table 1, over half of the offenders were Caucasian (60.6%), one-quarter were Aboriginal (26.5%), and 6.6% were Black. The distribution of Aboriginal offenders in this population is slightly higher than the percentage of Aboriginal offenders in CSC (21.9%) (Public Safety Canada, 2015). Nearly half the offenders were single (47.4%), while approximately one-third were married or in a common-law relationship (34.1%).

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<sup>1</sup> The OIA is conducted upon sentencing and involves the collection of a wide variety of information pertaining to criminal and mental health, social situation, education and other factors relating to criminal risk and criminogenic needs (i.e., employment, marital/family, associates, substance abuse, community functioning, personal/emotional orientation and attitude; Motiuk, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> Two indicators scored as part of the OIA process to determine whether an offender had a child victim: "Previous offence – victims were children" and "Current offence – victims were children".

Table 1

## Demographic Characteristics of Federal Offenders with a Child Victim

	<i>n</i>	%
<i>N</i> = 3518		
Gender		
Men	3415	97.1
Women	103	2.9
Marital status <sup>a</sup>		
Single	1667	47.4
Married/common-law	1199	34.1
Divorced/separated	524	14.9
Widowed	65	1.8
Ethnicity <sup>b</sup>		
White	2133	60.6
Aboriginal	932	26.5
Black	231	6.6
Other <sup>c</sup>	215	6.1

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> *n* missing marital status = 63 (1.2%). <sup>b</sup> *n* missing ethnicity = 7 (0.2%). <sup>c</sup> Includes: Arab/West Asian, Asiatic, East Indian, Hispanic, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Latin American, South Asian, Sub-Sahara African, Arab, East/Southeast Asian, South Asian, West Asian, Caribbean, Eastern European, Southern European, and Multi-Race/Ethnicity.

**Profile of Victims: File Review**

For this study victims were defined as anyone who “has suffered harm and/or physical or emotional damage as a result of an offence for which the offender has been convicted”, or “was harmed as a result of an offence for which the offender was not convicted” (CSC, 2014)<sup>5</sup>. To obtain victim information not routinely collected in the OMS, an in-depth file review (see Appendix A: Coding Manual and Dataset Description) was conducted on a random sample of 488 offenders (478 men and 10 women offenders) selected from the total population of offenders described above. Through file coding, 1665 victims (both child and adult) were identified; 1474

<sup>5</sup>The definition of victim also includes victim representatives, which are known as “an individual or agency authorized to make information requests or receive offender information on the victim’s behalf” (Gobeil et al., 2012, p.9).



were children (459 male and 816 female) and 191 were adults (49 men and 139 women). Of the child victims for whom the age of onset of victimization was documented in offender files, about 60% had been under the age of 15 years,  $M = 9.9$ ,  $SD = 4.4$ ). Further demographic information for the victims is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

*Demographic Characteristics of the Victims of Offenders Who Have Had a Child Victim: File Review*

	<i>n</i>	%
Victim Age <sup>a</sup>	<i>N</i> = 1474	
0-5	190	12.9
6-10	347	23.5
11-15	425	28.8
16-18	102	6.9
Victim Gender <sup>b</sup>		
Male	459	31.1
Female	816	55.4

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> *n* missing data on age = 410 (27.8%). <sup>b</sup> *n* missing data on victim gender = 199 (13.5%). Ethnicity for victims was not consistently documented in offender files and as a result is unable to be reported at this time

## Perpetrators

Offender demographic characteristics and offence and sentencing information were extracted from the OMS administrative database for all offenders who have had a child victim, based on the OMS indicators ( $N = 3518$ ). Additional information on the offenders and victims that is not routinely populated in CSC's administrative data source, but may be available in the text fields of OMS documents was captured through a detailed file review of a random subsample of the total offenders. Specifically, offender files were reviewed to code for additional information on offender victimization experiences (e.g., childhood abuse), victim demographics, victimization methods, victim-offender relationship, and any documented level of physical and psychological harm. (See Appendix A for the coding manual).

**Procedure/Analytic Approach**

The results of the file coding were entered and managed in Excel and were subsequently imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 22) for data cleaning and analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to generate the profiles for both the offenders and victims.

## Results

The results are presented in two sections, with the profile of offenders presented first, followed by the profile of the child victims.

### Federal Offenders Who Have Ever had a Child Victim Identified from OMS Indicators

**Offence and sentencing profile.** Table 3 shows the offence information for the total population of offenders who were identified as ever having a child victim on the current or a previous sentence. As shown, the most serious index offence for these offenders was most often sexual in nature. The average sentence length for those with a determinate sentence was 4.1 years ( $SD = 3.4$ ); 557 offenders (15.8%) were sentenced indeterminately<sup>6</sup>.

Table 3

#### *Offence Profile of All Offenders with a Child Victim*

	<i>n</i>	%
	<i>N</i> = 3518	
Most serious index offence <sup>a</sup>		
Murder/attempted murder/manslaughter	421	12.0
Sexual offence	1641	46.6
Robbery	149	4.2
Drug offence	99	2.8
Assault	277	7.9
Other violent offence <sup>b</sup>	176	5.0
Property offence	219	6.2
Other non-violent offence	534	15.2

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> *n* missing most serious offence = 2 (.06%). <sup>b</sup> Includes abduction, kidnapping, forcible confinement/hostage taking/hijacking, torture, extortion, intimidation, and utter threats.

**Offender history of victimization as a child.** One goal of the in-depth coding was to obtain additional information pertaining to offenders' history of victimization. Of the 488 randomly selected offenders who had at least one child victim, there was evidence on file of a history of childhood abuse for 192 of them (39.3%)<sup>7</sup>. The fact that it was not found on 40% of

<sup>6</sup> Refers to life sentences (i.e., CSC maintains authority over the individuals, either in a correctional institution or in the community, until they die), as well as sentences where offenders have a designated "dangerous offender" status; these individuals remain under the custody of CSC until the Parole Board of Canada determines that they no longer pose a threat to society (Trevethan, Crutcher, & Moore, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that this does not indicate that the remaining 61% of offenders did not experience childhood abuse; rather it indicates that the information was available for about 40% of the sub-sample.

the files, however, may not mean that abuse was not part of their history. To cross-check these results, we reviewed the OMS indicators from the Family/Marital domain on the DFIA that tap the offenders' history of abuse ('victim of child abuse';  $N = 3518$ ). Here, we found that 43.1% had a documented history childhood abuse. Again, there was a significant amount of missing data (40% of cases). Further, the administrative data indicated that 34.6% of all offenders who had had a child victim had witnessed family violence during childhood (item on the Family/Marital domain). For offenders whose childhood victimization was documented, the average age of onset of abuse was 8.4 years ( $SD = 3.9$ ) and the most commonly documented type of abuse was sexual and physical in nature (32.0% and 31.2%, respectively). In almost all of these cases, the perpetrator of the abuse was a parental figure (97.2%).

Table 4

*History of Childhood Abuse: File Review for a Sample of Offenders with a Child Victim*

	<i>n</i>	%
<i>N</i> = 488		
Victimization type, <i>n</i> = 381 <sup>a</sup>		
Sexual abuse	122	32.0
Physical abuse	119	31.2
Emotional abuse	38	10.0
Neglect	22	5.8
Abandonment	10	2.6
Exposure <sup>b</sup> to domestic violence	44	11.5
Exposure <sup>b</sup> to violence	6	1.6
Exposure <sup>b</sup> to substance abuse	13	3.4
Other <sup>c</sup>	12	3.1
Relationship of offender and perpetrator, <i>n</i> = 215 <sup>d</sup>		
Parental figure <sup>f</sup>	209	97.2
Family relative <sup>g</sup>	57	26.5
Foster parent	5	2.3
Boyfriend/girlfriend of parent	8	3.7
Friend/boyfriend/girlfriend	4	1.9
Acquaintance	51	23.7
Stranger	6	2.8

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> *n* missing information victimization = 107 (21.9%); categories are not mutually exclusive. <sup>b</sup> Defined by the child witnessing the event and/or being in the home at the time of the event. <sup>c</sup> Includes terrorist attacks, attempted abduction, witnessing animal cruelty, compelling prostitution, solicitation, and arson. <sup>d</sup> Information on relationship between offender and perpetrator of childhood abuse was not found in 273(55.9%) of the files reviewed; categories are not mutually exclusive. <sup>e</sup> Includes biological mother, biological father, step-mother, step-father. <sup>f</sup> Includes uncle, aunt, cousin, brother, sister, close friend.

## **Summary: Offenders**

Using administrative data collected during the intake process allowed for the development of a profile of federal offenders who have ever had a child victim on their current or a previous sentence. These data indicated that over half of this sample were incarcerated for a sexual crime and had an average sentence length of about 4 years. Of these offenders, at least 43% (for whom this data was documented, either systematically through OMS indicators or in text files of the OMS system) had experienced childhood abuse, most often from a parental figure.

## **Victims of Offenders Who Have Ever Had a Child Victim**

A total of 1665 victims (both child and adult) were identified from a detailed review of the random sample 488 offender files. Of the 488 files that were manually coded for victim information, the number of victims per offender documented ranged from 1 to 87 ( $M = 11.8$ )<sup>8</sup>.

The next section provides a profile of the 1474 child victims, defined as 18 years or younger at the time of their victimization. The focus will be on the offences perpetrated against them, the types of victimization, as well as any documented physical and psychological harm caused.

**Offences and types of victimization.** The types of offences committed against children are presented in Table 5. The most frequent offence category was sexual and included sexual assault or juvenile pornography for the majority (83.5%) of children. About one-third (37.2%) of the victims experienced some form of violence including assault, murder/attempted murder, robbery, abduction or confinement. A smaller percentage of the children were indirect victims who witnessed sexual acts, assault, and domestic violence.

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<sup>8</sup> Data on victim information is limited by what was available in the offender files and does not allow for an exhaustive identification of all possible victims. As such, this number is likely an under-representation of the number of victims who have had a crime perpetrated against them by the offenders included in the study.

Table 5

*Offences Committed Against Child Victims: Based on File Review of a Sample of Offenders with a Child Victim*

	<i>n</i>	%
<i>N</i> =1474		
Sexual assault	1075	72.9
Assault <sup>a</sup>	251	17.0
Juvenile pornography	156	10.6
Other <sup>b</sup>	122	8.3
Murder/attempted murder	79	5.4
Robbery	52	3.5
Witness of sexual acts	38	2.6
Witness of assault	37	2.5
Witness of domestic violence	26	1.8
Abduction	23	1.6
Confinement	20	1.4
Internet luring	18	1.2
Neglect	15	1.0

*Note.* Categories are not mutually exclusive and therefore do not sum to total number of victims. <sup>a</sup> Includes simple, aggravated, and serious assault. <sup>b</sup> Includes terrorist attack, witnessing animal cruelty, arson, compelling prostitution, and solicitation.

As shown in Table 6, the abuse of power, position, or authority (defined as abuse perpetrated by someone who had been in a position of power or authority or trust over the victim), was the most commonly reported method of victimization ( 69.6% of the victims). Violence was next, which was involved in nearly one quarter (24.7%) of the reported offences committed against these victims.

Table 6

*Victimization Methods Used Against Child Victims Identified from File Review*

	<i>n</i> <sup>a</sup>	%
<i>N</i> = 1474		
Use of Power/Position/Authority on Victim	1026	69.6
Violence Used	364	24.7
Weapons Used	90	6.1
Threats of Death	87	5.9
Threats of Violence	66	4.5
Threats with Weapon	46	3.1
Substances Used	39	2.6

*Note.* Categories are not mutually exclusive and more than one victimization method may have been coded per victim; <sup>a</sup> *n* missing information on victimization method = 12 (0.8%).

**Level of harm.**

**Psychological harm.** Table 7 summarizes the psychological harm resulting from the offences as documented in the offenders' files. The type of psychological harm most frequently experienced by the victims was fear (29.2%), followed by "feeling dirty" (18.5%), and anger (16.0%). Very few victims were coded as having "no psychological harm" (0.9%) as a result of their experience, highlighting the extent of the impact of these offences.



Table 7

*Psychological Harm Experienced by Child Victims: File Review*

	<i>n</i>	%
	<i>N</i> = 874	
Fear	255	29.2
Feeling dirty	162	18.5
Anger	140	16.0
Lack of trust	100	11.4
Nightmares	93	10.6
Sadness	82	9.4
Shame	74	8.5
Low self-esteem	69	7.9
Lonely	65	7.4
Guilt	62	7.1
Anxiety	55	6.3
Depression	54	6.2
Lack of concentration	47	5.4
Flashbacks	43	4.7
Hurt	41	4.7
Suicidal ideation	40	4.6
Intimacy issues	39	4.5
Paranoia	37	4.2
Stress	36	4.1
Confusion	22	2.5
Change in personality	17	1.9
PTSD	15	1.7
Powerless	14	1.6
Betrayal	12	1.4
Feeling unsafe	11	1.3
Empty	2	0.2
Shock	1	0.1
Other <sup>a</sup>	96	11.0
None	8	0.9

*Note.* Data on psychological harm was documented for 874 (59.3%) of the child victims. Categories are not mutually exclusive with more than one level of harm reported for each victim; <sup>a</sup> Includes defiant, drained, regression, overwhelmed, agoraphobia, reckless, agitation, mood swings, obsessive-compulsive disorder, self-loathing, disassociation, vulnerable, and emotional dependence.

**Physical Harm.** As indicated in Table 8, of the children for whom there was file evidence of the consequences of the crimes, severe injury (e.g., life threatening injuries as a result of stabbing or gunshot wounds) and moderate injury (e.g., broken bones, scars), and death was noted for 41.8% of the child victims.

Table 8

*Physical Harm Experienced by the Child Victims: Based on Review of Offenders' Files*

	<i>n</i> <sup>a</sup>	%
<i>N</i> = 719		
Death	140	19.5
Severe injury <sup>a</sup>	43	6.0
Moderate injury	117	16.3
Minor injury <sup>b</sup>	44	6.1
Sleep disturbances	66	9.2
Alcohol/drug abuse	38	5.3
Self-injurious behaviour	28	3.9
Change in eating habits	24	3.3
Headaches	19	2.6
Pregnancy	14	1.9
High blood pressure	3	0.4
Sexually transmitted infection	3	0.4
Other <sup>c</sup>	31	4.3

*Note.* Data on physical harm was available for 719 (48.8%) of the child victims. <sup>a</sup> Includes stab wounds, gunshot wounds, life threatening injuries. <sup>b</sup> Includes bumps, scratches, bruises. <sup>c</sup> Includes skin problems, cold sweats, hyperventilation, pain, low immunity, diabetes, loss of consciousness, change in libido, and nausea.

**Relationship to perpetrator.** Table 9 summarizes the relationship between the victims and perpetrators. Just under three-quarters of these victims (71%), were victimized by individuals known to them, with the largest proportion being victimized by an acquaintance or friend (32.4%). Only 27% of these children were victimized by a stranger.

Table 9

*Relationship between Perpetrator and Victim: File Review*

	<i>n</i> <sup>a</sup>	%
<i>N</i> = 1474		
Parental figure <sup>b</sup>	350	23.7
Family relative <sup>c</sup>	201	13.6
Boyfriend/girlfriend	16	1.1
Acquaintance/friend	453	30.7
Stranger	402	27.3

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> *n* missing information on relationship between perpetrator and victim= 27 (1.8%); categories are mutually exclusive. <sup>b</sup> Includes biological mother, biological father, step-parent, boyfriend or girlfriend of parent, foster parent.

<sup>c</sup> Includes uncle, aunt, cousin, brother, sister, close friend.

**Victims registered with the National Victim Service Program (NVSP) at CSC.** As part of the services offered by the NVSP at the CSC, victims of federal offenders (and victim representatives) can register to receive information and updates regarding the offenders who have perpetrated a crime against them. Only a small percentage (11.9%; *n* = 175) of the 1474 child victims in the sample are registered with the NVSP. We compared the child victims who were identified as being registered with the NVSP with the child victims who were not registered. Results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

*Comparison of Child Victims Registered with NVSP to Those Who Are Not Registered*

	Registered with NVSP <i>n</i> =175	Not registered <i>n</i> =1299	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i> <sup>a</sup>
	<i>n (%)</i>			
Offence perpetrated				
Homicide	14 (8.0)	45 (3.5)	8.26	.012
Attempted murder	3 (1.7)	17 (1.3)	.190	.723
Sexual assault	149 (85.1)	786 (60.5)	40.35	<b>.000</b>
Simple assault	7 (4.0)	69 (5.3)	.54	.585
Aggravated assault	26 (14.9)	136 (10.5)	3.04	.093
Serious assault	4 (2.3)	9 (0.7)	4.48	.058
Robbery	1 (0.6)	51 (3.9)	5.10	.016
Confinement	0 (0.0)	20 (1.5)	2.73	.098
Neglect	4 (2.3)	11 (0.8)	3.17	.092
Juvenile pornography	15 (8.6)	141 (10.9)	.85	.432
Abduction	4 (2.3)	19 (1.5)	.68	.410
Witness of domestic violence	7 (4.0)	19 (1.5)	5.73	.027
Witness of sexual acts	3 (1.7)	35 (2.7)	.59	.613
Witness assault	0 (0.0)	37 (2.8)	5.11	.017
Internet luring	2 (1.1)	16 (1.2)	.010	1.00
Victimization method <sup>b</sup>				
Use of power/position/authority	147 (84.0)	879(68.3)	18.15	<b>.000</b>
Violence used	39 (22.3)	325 (25.3)	.73	.456
Weapons used	22 (12.6)	68 (5.3)	14.16	<b>.001</b>
Substances used	3 (1.7)	36 (2.8)	.70	.615
Threats of death	12 (6.9)	75 (5.8)	.29	.608
Threats of violence used	12 (6.9)	54 (4.2)	2.53	.120
Threats with weapon	4 (2.3)	42 (3.3)	.48	.646
Relationship between offender and victim <sup>c</sup>				
Parental figure	101 (57.7)	249 (19.6)	122.03	<b>.000</b>
Family relative	29 (16.6)	172 (13.5)	1.20	.294
Boyfriend/girlfriend	2 (1.1)	14 (1.1)	.00	1.00
Acquaintance/friend	27 (15.4)	450 (35.4)	27.70	<b>.000</b>
Stranger	16 (9.1)	386 (30.3)	34.47	<b>.000</b>

When compared to non-registered victims, significantly more of those registered were

victims of serious crimes such as homicide<sup>9</sup> or sexual assault. In addition, the offender files of victims registered with the NVSP were likely to contain victimization experiences that documented that the perpetrator was a parental figure, and the offence involved an abuse of power, position or authority or involved the use of a weapon. Among those not registered with the NVSP, the relationship between perpetrator and victim was more commonly that of an acquaintance/friend or a stranger. It is noteworthy that the majority of the child victims identified within this study were not registered with the NVSP. Either these victims or their caregivers did not wish to have information regarding the offender or they were not aware that the service exists.

### **Summary: Victims**

Overall, the file review of a subset of files of offenders who have perpetrated crimes against a child victim has provided some important insights into the characteristics of child victims. The findings suggest that the crimes were most often sexual in nature but about one-third experienced some form of nonsexual violence. Further, these victims experienced a range of psychological and physical harm as a result of the offences. Finally, the results of the file reviews confirm that the majority of perpetrators were known to the victims.

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<sup>9</sup> Registered victims of homicide include member(s) of the victim's family.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the characteristics of offenders who have perpetrated a crime against a child, as well as to develop a better understanding of the characteristics of the child victims with respect to the types of offences perpetrated against them, the victimization methods used, as well as the psychological and physical harm resulting from the crimes. Research that profiles child victims provides agencies such as the CSC with key information that can be applied in the provision of appropriate services to support victims of crime.

Results of this study suggest that victims of federal offenders, including those who were registered with the NVSP, have been subjected to serious crimes (most frequently sexual assault) and that the victimization begins at a young age. Victims of these crimes are reported to have suffered from serious injuries as well as psychological problems. Research that increases understanding of the level and type of harm experienced as a result of victimization can provide the basis for the development of more targeted and focussed services suited to victims' needs (see Norman et al., 2012).

There is a common misperception that most crimes are committed by strangers (Lanning, 2010). As reported in this study, most crimes perpetrated against child victims were committed by family members or acquaintances. For those families that wish to maintain some level of continued contact with the offender, there is a need for access to interventions that address the disruption in family dynamics as a result of these crimes.

Through file review of a sample of offender files and cross-checking with administrative data from the DFIA we found that at least 40% of federally sentenced offenders who have perpetrated crimes against children themselves had been victims of child abuse. The offenders' victimization experiences in general were not well-documented and even the administrative data collected recording this history had a significant amount of missing information. Nevertheless, the significant percentage of offenders who have documented histories of being abused as children points to the devastating impact of early trauma on individuals and the increased risk of perpetration of the cycle of abuse. Better quality control over data collection in this area could provide an important source of information for appropriate case management and planning of correctional interventions that would consider the role of personal abuse in the lives of offenders

and the impact of this experience on their risk to offend.

Overall the study highlights that to develop the capacity for effective services targeted to meet the needs of both perpetrators and their victims, information related to victims needs to be documented more systematically and routinely. The services offered by the NVSP of the CSC are currently only available for those victims who request to be involved. As indicated by the relatively low number of child victims in this study who were registered with the NVSP, there may be a much larger proportion of victims who could benefit from such services. It may be necessary to increase awareness of these services to victims of crime.

### **Limitations**

The results of this study provide a starting point in the understanding of the needs of child victims of crimes perpetrated by federally sentenced offenders. One limitation to this research is that the findings may not reflect a full picture given the under-reporting of victimization, particularly among children. What is more, among federal offenders who have been convicted of offense against a child, information on victims is not routinely documented. For example, missing data made it difficult to provide accurate estimates of the prevalence of types of harm to victims. The same is true in the examination of information on the victimization of the perpetrators themselves. Future research should utilize a more definitive and systematic method to capture information on crimes perpetrated against children that would allow for a more accurate understanding of child victimization experiences. Furthermore, research regarding the differences between victims who chose to register for NVSP or similar services and those who do not and the reasons they decide not to register would benefit organizations attempting to offer this type of assistance.

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## Appendix A: Coding Manual & Dataset Description

### Description of the abbreviations in the Coded\_Information document titles

- **FPS:** Finger Print System
- **O\_DOB:** Offender's date of birth
- **O\_GENDER:** Offender's gender
- **V\_DOB:** Victim's date of birth
- **V\_GENDER:** Victim's gender
- **V\_RACE:** Victim's race
- **RELATION\_O-V:** Offender's relationship with the victim
- **DATE\_OFFENCE:** Date when the offence occurred
- **STATUS CJS:** Status within the criminal justice system
- **VMZ\_METHODS:** Victimization methods
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL\_HARM:** Psychological harms the victim has suffered
- **PHYSICAL\_HARM:** Physical harms the victim has suffered
- **O\_CHILD VMZ\_TYPE:** Offender's childhood victimization type
- **O\_AGE\_CHILD VMZ:** Offender's age during his childhood victimization
- **RELATION P-O:** Relationship between the perpetrator and the offender as a child

### Description of each of the variables used for the coding dataset (Coded\_Information.doc

- **FPS:** Refers to the offender's finger print system number.
- **Offender's date of birth:** Refers to the offender's date of birth (year-month-day).
- **Offender's gender.**
- **Victim's date of birth:** Refers to the victim's date of birth (year-month-day).
- **Victim's gender:**
- **Victim's race:**
  - White
  - Black
  - Hispanic
  - Chinese
  - Other
- **Relationship Offender-Victim:** Refers to the offender's relationship with the victim.
  - *Family relatives:* Uncle, aunt, cousin, brother, sister, close friend.
  - *Non-parental relatives:* Stranger, a friend of a friend.

- ***Friends:*** The victim was friend with the offender. Friend refers to a person attached to another by feelings of affection or personal regard.
  - ***Stepfather:*** The husband of the victim's mother.
  - ***Biological father:*** A parent who has sired and whose genes are transmitted to the child.
  - ***Biological mother:*** A parent who has conceived and whose genes are transmitted to the child.
  - ***Boyfriend/girlfriend of parents:*** The man/woman that is dating the parent.
  - ***Other acquaintances:*** Any other relationship that are not cited above.
- **Date of the offence:**
  - **Offence of child victimization:** Refers to the type of crime which the child has been victim of.
    - ***Rape:*** Refers to any act of sexual intercourse that is forced upon a person- recorded as sexual assault.
    - ***Sexual assault:*** Refers to all incidents of unwanted sexual activity, including sexual attacks and sexual touching.
    - ***Simple assault:*** Refers to a push, a slap and a punch or to verbal threats.
    - ***Aggravated assault:*** Refers to the use of weapon or to physical injuries.
    - ***Serious assault:*** Refers to mutilation, disfigurement and any kind of assault that put the victim's life in danger.
    - ***Neglect:*** Refers to when the offender has the responsibility to provide care or assistance to the child but does not. It includes:
      - Not providing needed medication, food, shelter, or clean clothing.
      - Failure to provide emotional attention to a child
      - Criminal negligence causing bodily harm.
    - ***Homicide:*** Refers to when the offender causes the child's death directly or indirectly.
    - ***Juvenile pornography:*** Refers to the production, distribution, and possession of child pornography (less than 18 years old).
    - ***Abduction:*** Refers to an unauthorized removal of a child (under the age of 18) from his natural parents or legally appointed guardians.
    - ***Witness of domestic violence:*** It can be auditory, visual, or inferred, including cases in which the child perceives the aftermath of violence, such as physical injuries to family members or damage to property.
    - ***Other:*** Other types of offences than those described above.
  - **Status within the CJS:**
    - Current conviction
    - Past conviction
    - Charges laid (stayed, plea bargained, withdrawn)
    - Information/complaints
    - Self-report by offender
    - Victim impact statement (3<sup>rd</sup> party)
  - **Victimization methods:**

- Use of power/position/authority on victim
- Threat of violence to victim
- Threaten victim with a weapon
- Violence used against victim
- Weapons used against victim
  
- **Psychological harm:**
  - Anger
  - Fear
  - Depression
  - Nightmares
  - Suicidal ideation
  - PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder)
  - Overly suspicious
  - Guilt
  - Shame
  - Low self-esteem
  - Flashbacks
  - Changes in child's personality
  - Social anxiety
  - Lack of trust
  - Struggling with intimacy
  - Other
  
- **Physical harm:**
  - Pregnancy
  - Sexually transmitted diseases
  - Self-injurious behavior
  - Headaches
  - Throat sore
  - High pressure
  - Minor injuries (bumps, scratches)
  - Moderate injuries (bruises, broken bones, scars)
  - Severe injuries (stabbing, gunshot wounds)
  - Death
  - Other
  
- **Offender's childhood victimization type:**
  - Physical abuse (pushing, shoving, slapping, hitting)

- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse (threatening, demeaning, insulting behaviour)
- Neglect
- Maltreatment
- Exposure to domestic violence
- None
- Other
- **Age of offender's childhood victimization**
- **Relationship between the perpetrator and the offender as a child:**
  - Stepfather
  - Stepmother
  - Biological father
  - Biological mother
  - Boyfriend/girlfriend of parents
  - Other acquaintances