

PREVALENCE: RESEARCH AND SURVEYS

Preamble: In this section of our web site our objective is to collect and outline research and survey information, to begin to weave the collective social and global reality about the prevalence of ritual abuse-torture—of ritual abuse or satanic ritual abuse (SRA), other terms frequently used interchangeably in the literature. We welcome input from others who may be able to refer us to research and survey materials that we are unaware of.

A CANADIAN PERSPECTIVE

The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women

The process: In August 1991 the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women announced the appointed members of The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women. The Panel travelled to all parts of Canada, consulted with 4,000 people, in 139 communities, of which eighty-four per cent were women, 16 per cent were men. Status and non-status Aboriginal women, Inuit, and Métis women were also included.

Individuals and organizations submitted nearly 700 personal testimonies, discussion papers, research, and reports to the Panel. The Panel partially funded a Toronto-based study, *The Women's Safety Project*, which involved 420 in-depth interviews about violence against women, with women between the ages of 18 to 64. Additionally, The Panel distributed a survey through members of Parliament, for their constituents that provided another means for Canadians to share their experiences of violence with The Panel and offer opinions about solutions.

The Panel's process was to have an interactive dialogue with Canadians about violence against women. Few of The Panel's sessions were formal, no court reporters were present, and The Panel functioned at arm's length from the federal government having its own Secretariat.¹

The Panel's Final Report, *Changing the Landscape: Ending violence ~ Achieving equality*, released in 1993, emphasized that violence must be understood as a continuum that ranges from verbal abuse, to torture, to murder. The realities of physical, sexualized, emotional and psychological, financial, and spiritual victimization were documented. As were, ritual abuse, stalking/criminal harassment, pornography, misuse of reproductive technologies, and abuse of trust, which The Panel identified as under-acknowledged forms of violence.²

¹ The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women. (1993). *Changing the Landscape: Ending violence ~ Achieving equality, Executive Summary/National Plan* (Catalogue No. SW45-1/1993E, pp. 3-5). Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

² The Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women. (1993). *Changing the Landscape: Ending violence ~ Achieving equality* (Catalogue No. SW45-1/1993E, pp. 45-47). Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

The prevalence: “The Panel ... [heard] from many women from all regions of Canada who named themselves as survivors of ritual abuse. ... There are no statistics on ritual abuse in Canada.” (p. 45).

Major themes of ritual abuse victimization identified by the Panel’s Report are:

1. Ritual abuse cults/groups were both intergenerational and extra-familial
2. Child victims are forced into a group bonding process often with the co-operation of their family and forced to take vows and oaths of secrecy
3. Programming triggers are indoctrinated into survivors when they are children,
4. Victims are subjected to mind-control programming using hypnosis, mind-altering drugging, and the implantation of trigger messages to prevent them from disclosing their ritual abuse ordeals
5. **Torture**—long-term and repeated—pain, deprivation, death threats, harassment, and intimidation is used on young victims
6. Victims are forced to violate others
7. Survivors spoke of the profits ritual abuse torturers earned from filming or videotaping the violence, from the forced prostitution of victims, and from drug trafficking
8. Active cult members continue to threaten and harm adult survivors in a multitude of ways in order to force them to remain silent, most are threatened with death should they disclose their ritual abuse, and many have seen those who threaten them murder others thus their fears are justified
9. Perpetrators engage in organized efforts to discount the survivors disclosure of their ritual abuse-torture ordeals
10. All survivors told of extreme difficulties in finding any useful therapeutic help
11. Ignorance of medical staff often put some survivors at risk of Self injury
12. Helpers of survivors are also targets of organized efforts by perpetrators needing to discount and discredit the helper’s work with survivors of ritual abuse. Helpers must also deal with discreditation, denial, and disbelief from peers and the medical community, and may helpers reluctantly stop working with survivors because of these acts of harassment and oppression, and/or because of burnout and/or impossible practice conditions, and
13. There is no specific recognition of ritual abuse crimes in Canada’s Criminal Code.

FROM THE UNITED STATES

A sociological study by Margaret Smith

In 1993, Margaret Smith wrote a book entitled, *Ritual abuse what it is why it happens how to help*.³ Much of the information in her book was based on a sociological study using a questionnaire.

³ Smith, M. (1993). *Ritual abuse what it is why it happens how to help*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.

The process and prevalence: Fifty-two people, 50 women and 2 men, responded to announcements carried by five organizations and newsletters asking for survivors of ritual abuse to volunteer to complete a questionnaire on ritual abuse. Respondents, with an average age of 36, came from forty-five different US states, 2% were from Canada and 2% from Japan. Respondents also stated they had been victimized in Scotland, England, Germany, Mexico, South America, and Canada.

Major themes of ritual abuse victimization identified by respondents to Smith's questionnaire were:

1. Perpetrators were intergenerational and extra-familial, had interconnections with other groups, and came from all social classes, all occupations—professional and non-professional; 67% of respondents reported victimization by more than one cult/group
2. Many respondents, abused by their families, stated their parents practiced mainstream religion
3. Over one half of respondents experienced satanic-based group activities
4. Victimization tactics involved mind-control, triggering, hypnosis, and drugging
5. **Torture** of all forms was experienced by 94%, 75% were forced to torture others
6. Respondents, as children, were forced into prostitution, pornography, and rented out to other groups/cults
7. As children, respondents reported ordeals involving cruelty to animals: pet and animal killings and sacrifices for example; as well, they reported ritualistic ordeals, human sacrifices, and/or cannibalism, and bestiality
8. 65% stated their ritual abuse started before age three, and
9. Victimization ended for the greatest number of respondents when they were between the ages of 11-15 (29%); some were older, for example 36-40 (4%), and two respondents (4%) stated the ritual abuse was ongoing.

Smith states, “many survivors have grown weary of being re-victimized by mental health professionals and withdraw from therapy altogether” (p. 21). Smith provides Self-help solutions.

PERSONS AGAINST RITUAL ABUSE-TORTURE

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