

**Looking back to see our way forward:
Accomplishments and challenges in
domestic violence prevention**

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Consider the following three scenarios...

- (1) A stranger enters the home of a woman; after a struggle, he pulls out a gun and shoots her;
- (2) A man enters the home of a woman, his estranged female partner; there is a struggle and he pulls out a gun and shoots her;
- (3) A man and a woman – husband and wife – are at home; there is a struggle, he gets his gun and shoots her.

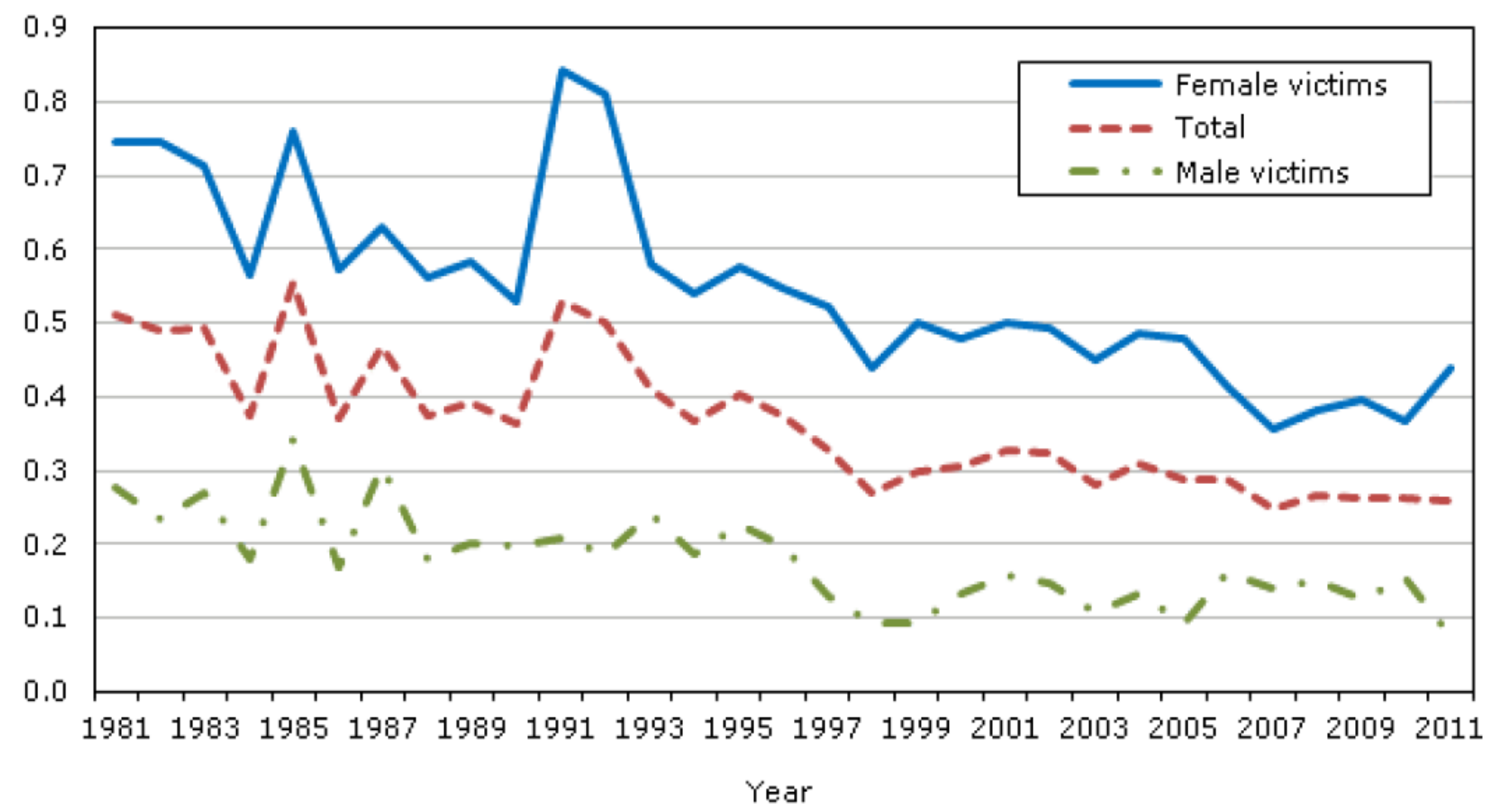
Key legislative and policy initiatives

- 'Domestic and child abuse' may be considered aggravating factor at sentencing
- Growth of available shelters
- Mandatory charging and no-drop policies
- Specialized domestic violence courts
- Treatment programs for abusers
- Other victim-assistance programs
- Additional legislative initiatives
- Domestic violence death review committees

Chart 9

Intimate partner homicide, by sex of victim, Canada, 1981 to 2011

rate per 100,000 population



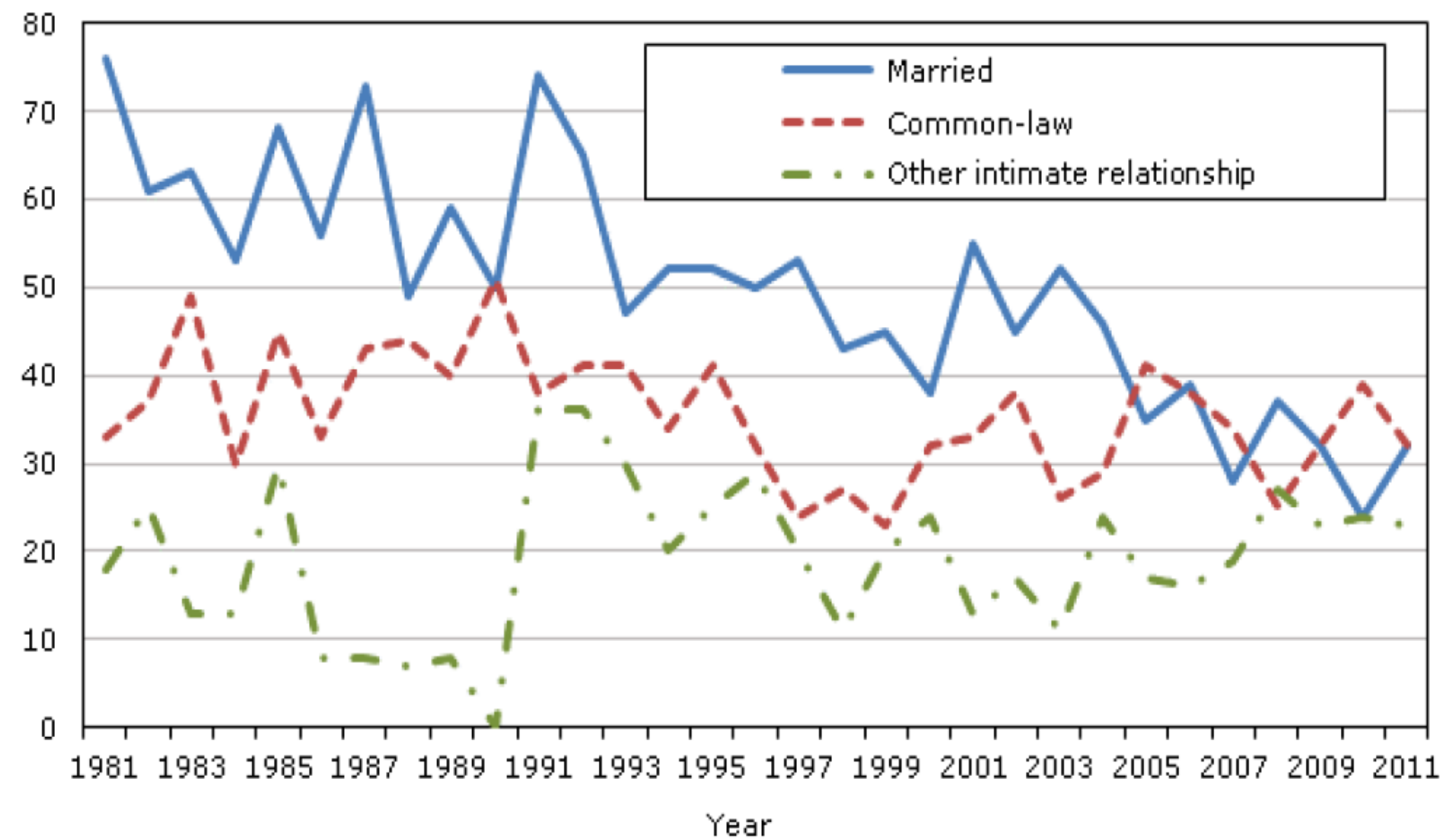
Note: Includes current and former spouses (married, common-law or same-sex), as well as persons in dating relationships.

Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Homicide Survey.

Chart 10

Intimate partner homicide, by relationship type, Canada, 1981 to 2011

number of homicides



Linking social & legal changes to declines...

Exposure Reduction Framework...

...three changes that may reduce exposure:

(Dugan et al. 2003; Dawson et al. 2009)

- Increasing gender equality;
- Changing relationship structures;
- Growth in domestic violence resources;

Figure 1: Percentage of the population with a university degree, 1976-2001

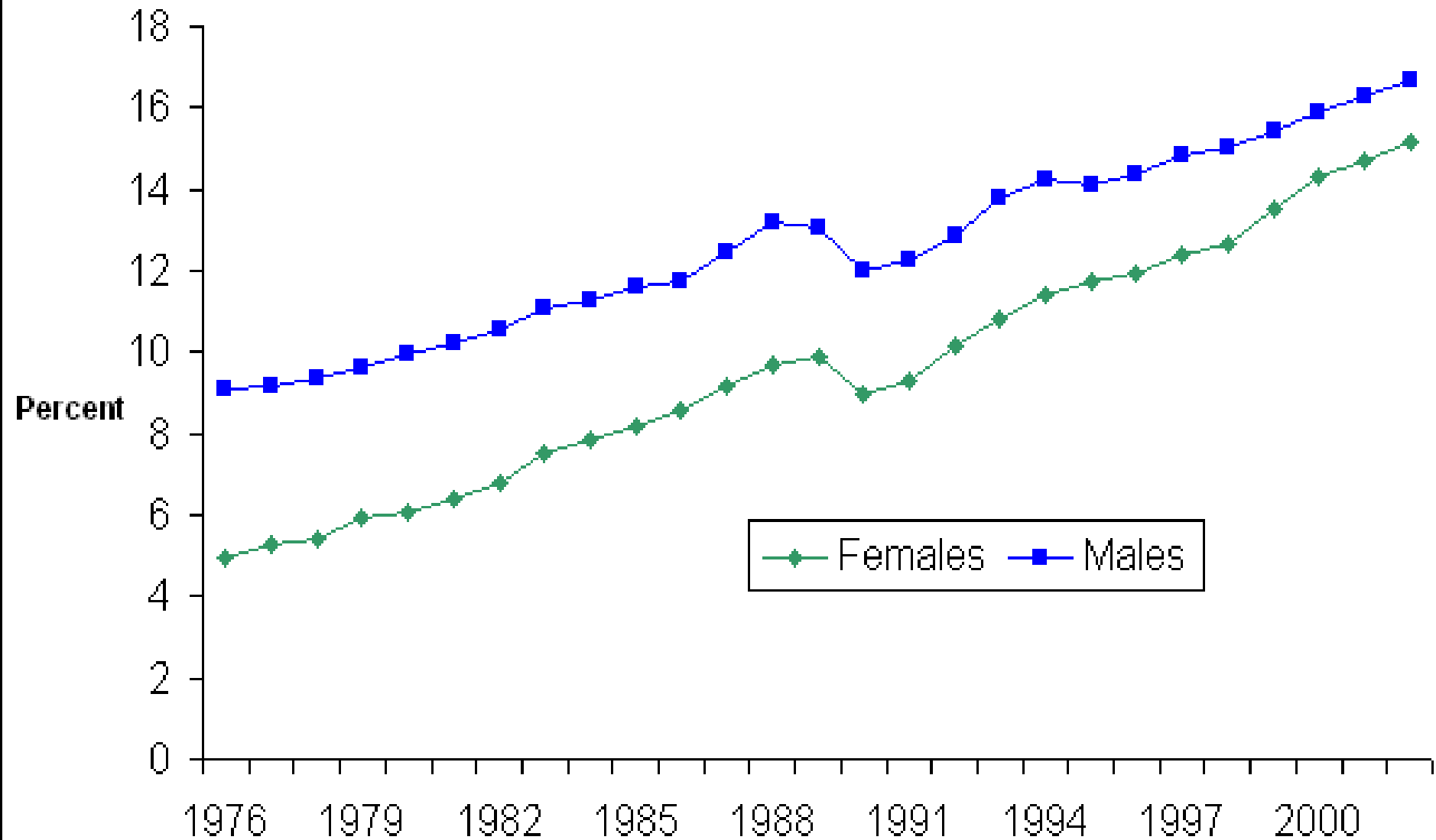


Chart 2

Percentage of women and men with a postsecondary degree, by province, 2009

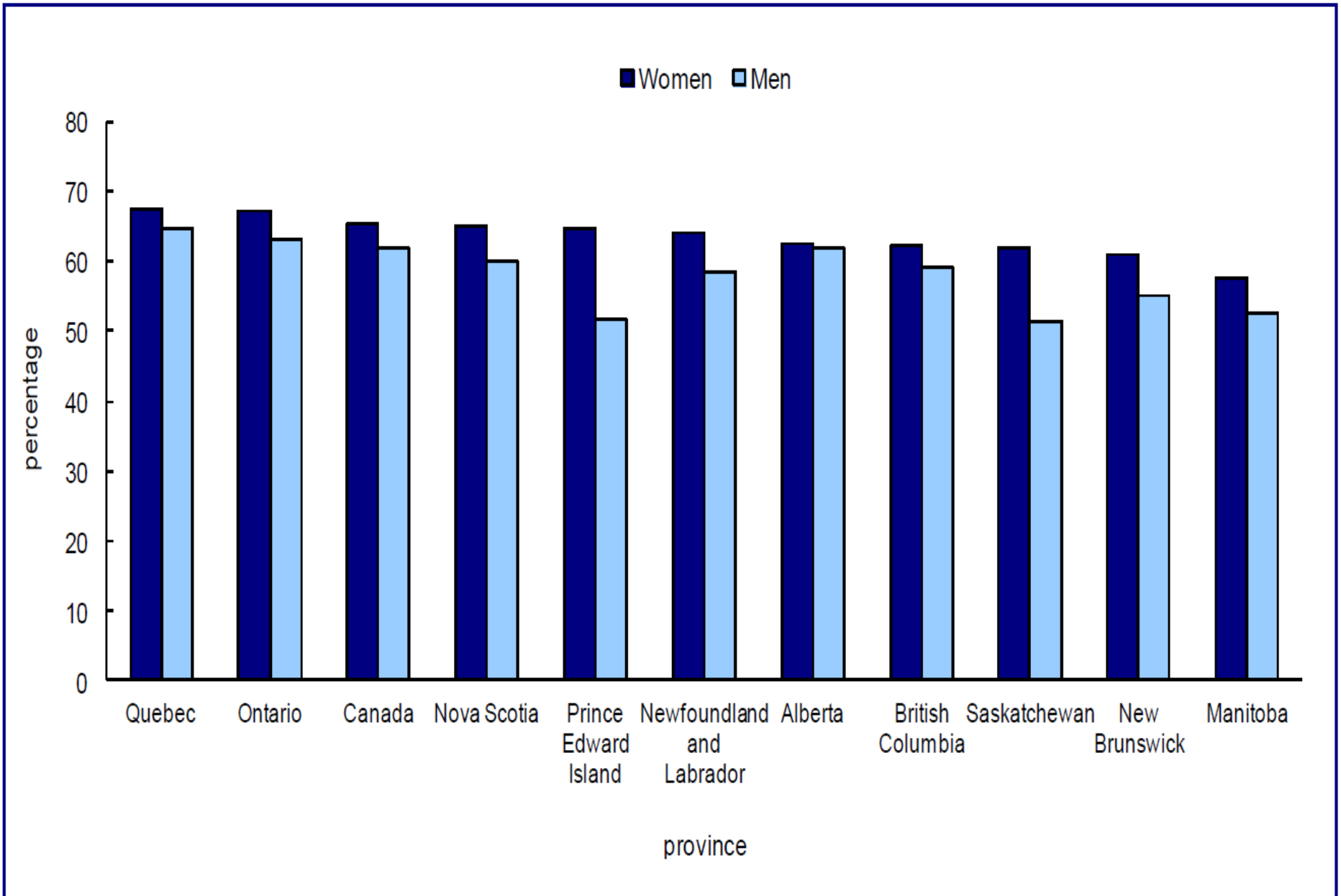
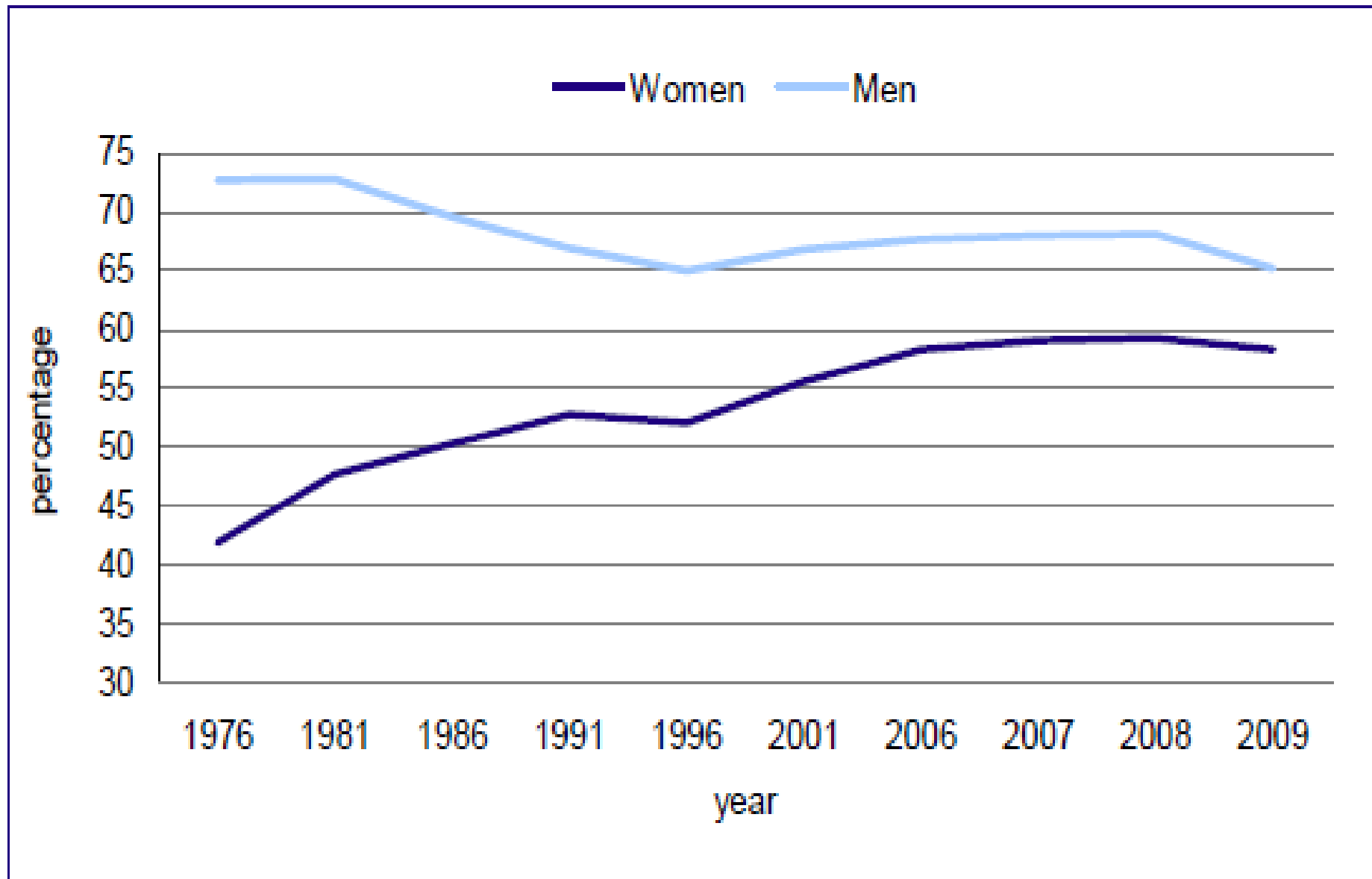


Chart 1

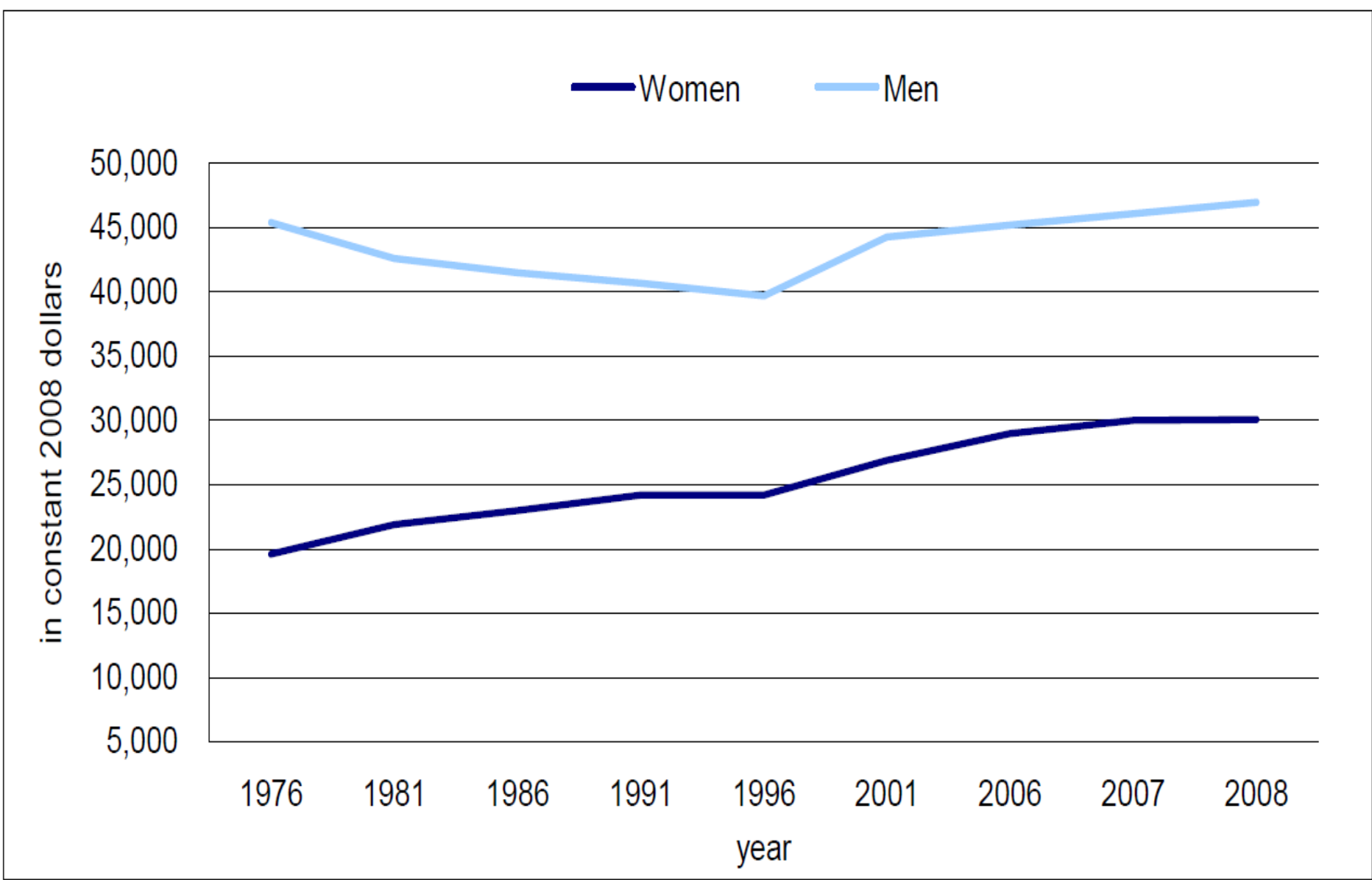
Employment rates of women and men, 1976 to 2009



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey.

Chart 1

Average total income of women and men, 1976 to 2008



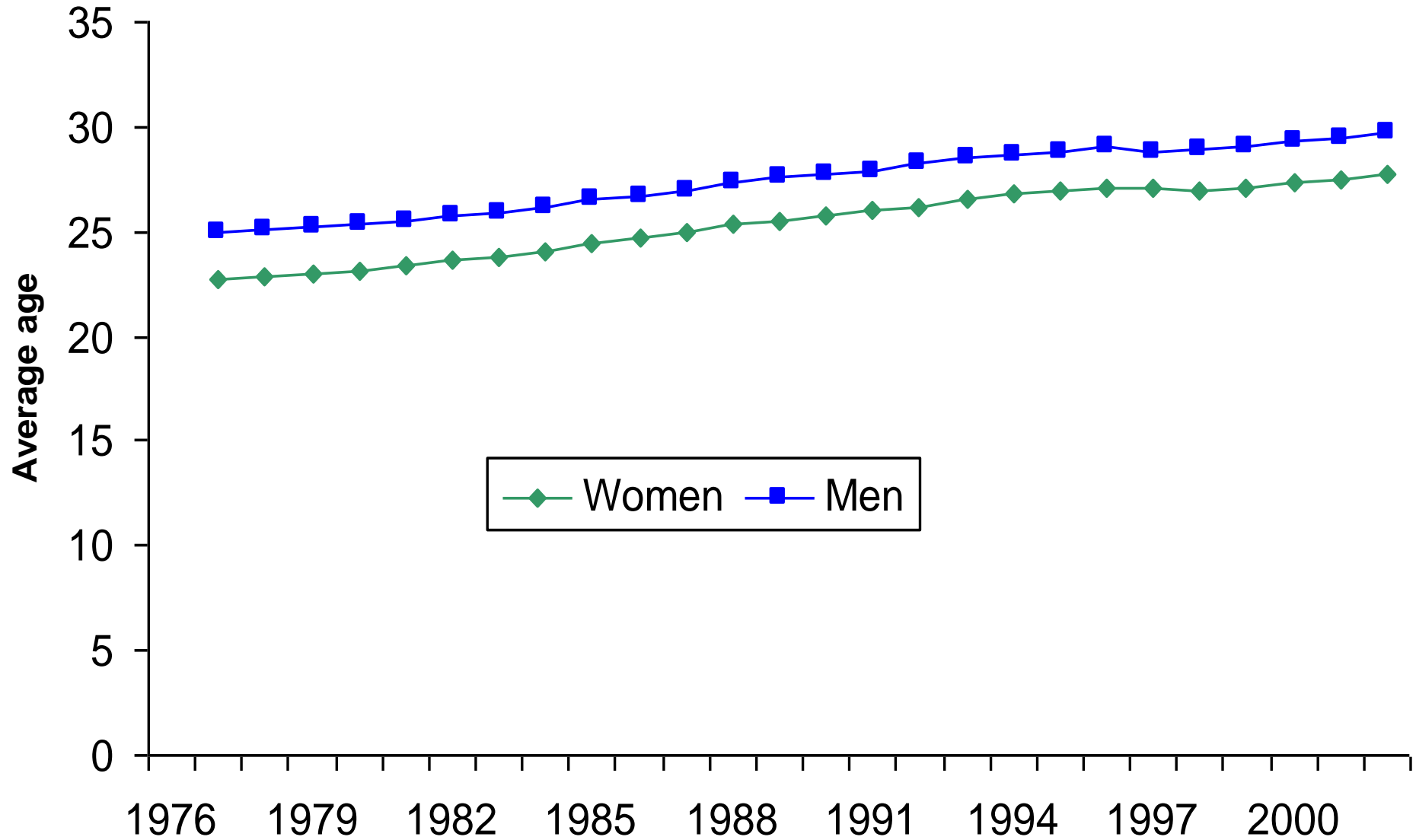
Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 202-0407.

Support for exposure reduction framework in Canada?

- Between 1974-2001, as the female-male **employment** gap decreased, the rate at which women were killed by male spouses decreased.
- However, while **education** levels for women increased more than they did for men, education was not related to women's risk of spousal homicide.
- We did find that, as the level of **university education** increased for males, the rate at which men were killed by female spouses decreased.

(Dawson, Pottie Bunge & Balde 2009)

Average age at first marriage, 1976 - 2001, Canada



Mother's average age at birth of first child, 1976-2001, Canada

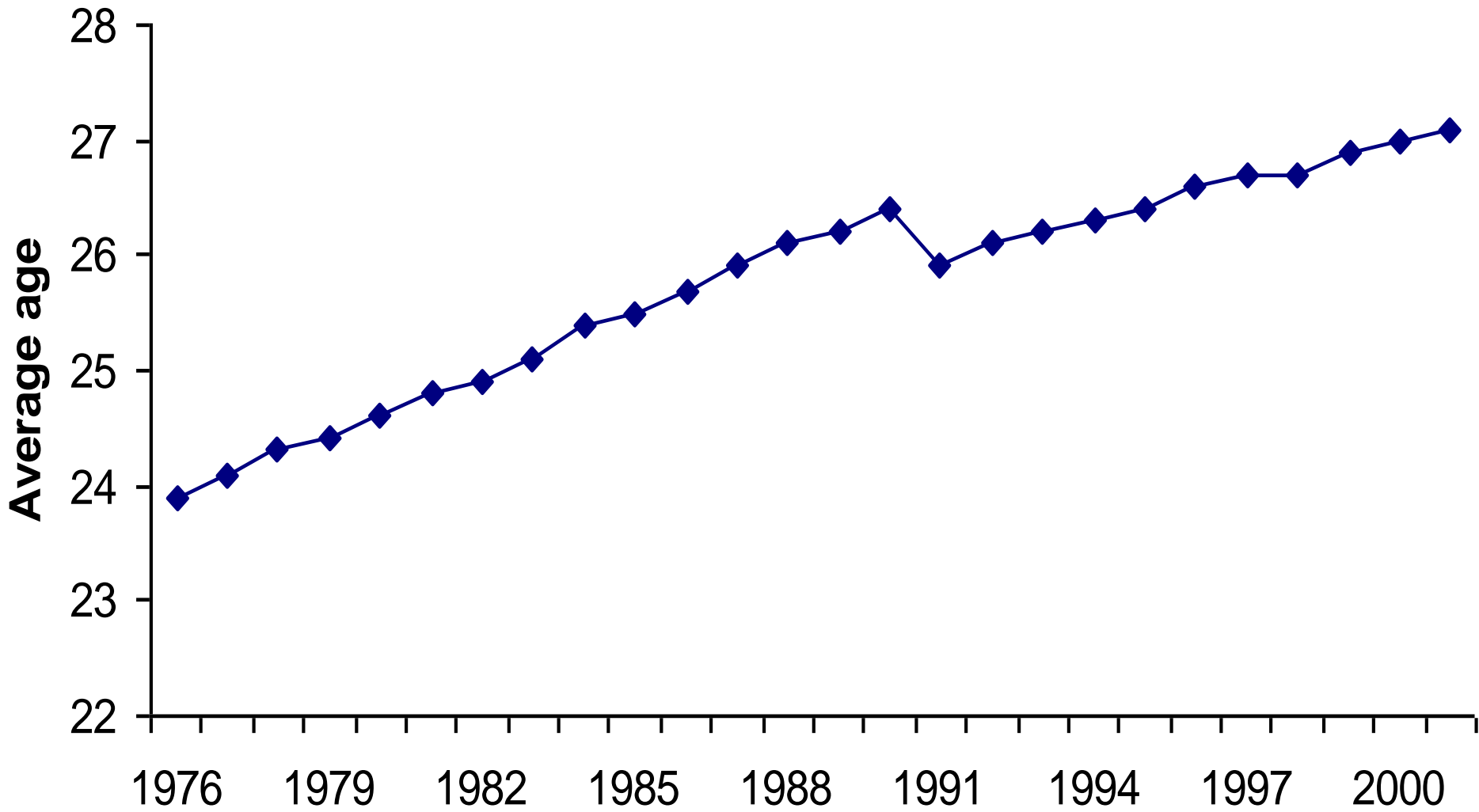
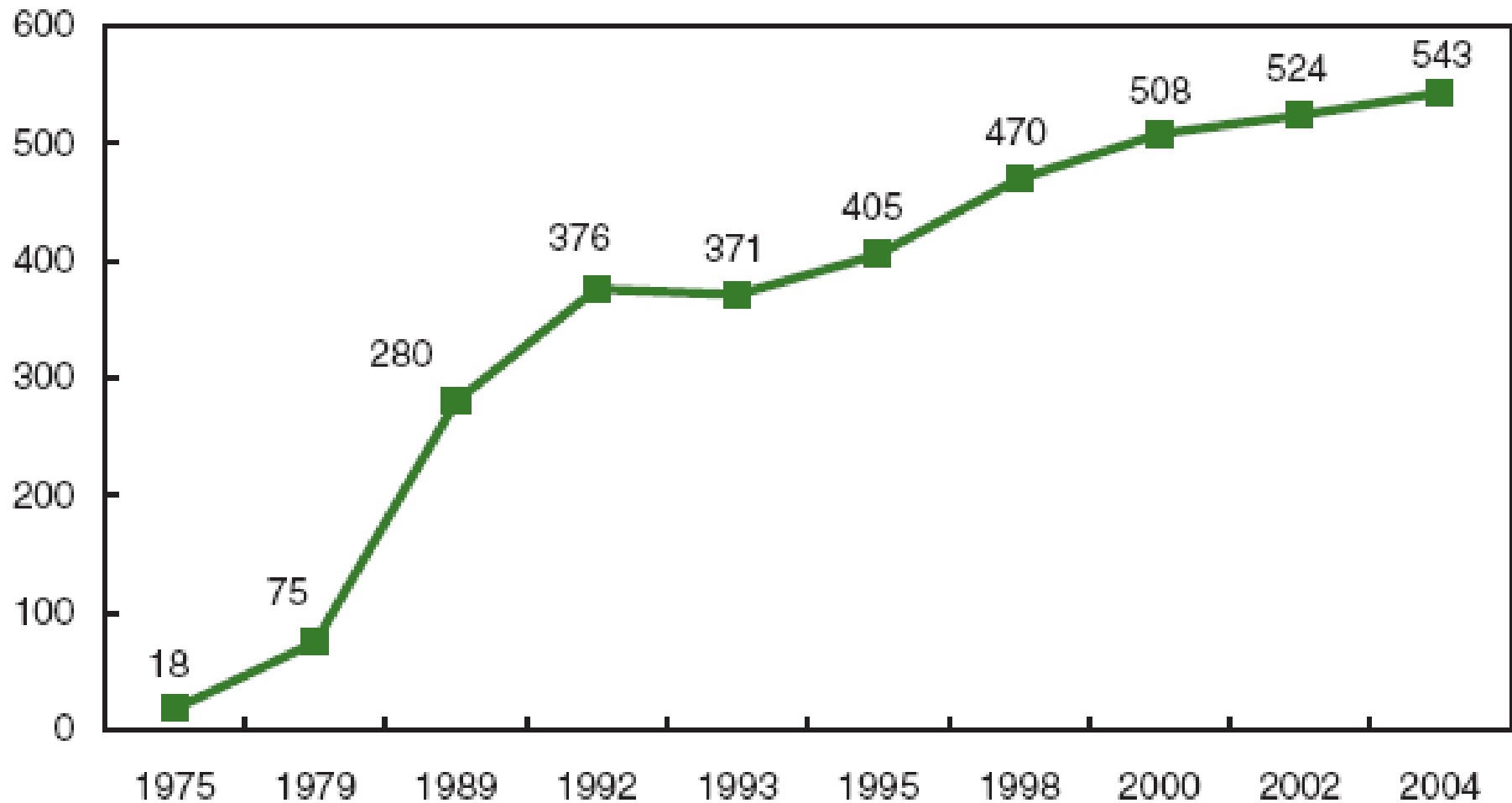


Figure 32

Change in the number of shelters

Number of shelters

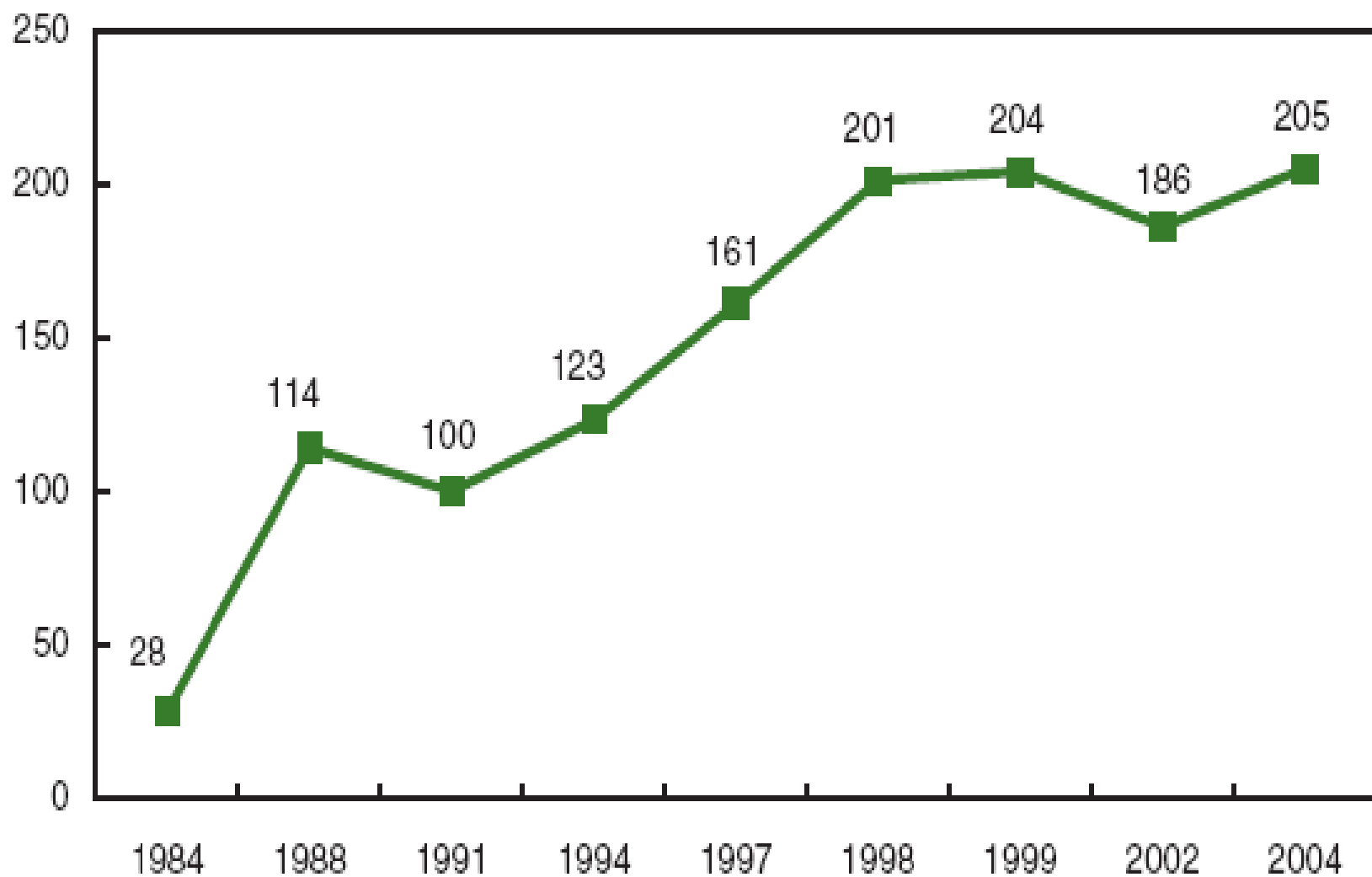


Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey.

Figure 33

Number of treatment programs for violent men

Number of programs



Source: Health Canada, *Canada's Treatment Programs for Men Who Abuse Their Partners*, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2004.

First Key Challenge

To systematically examine and document the impact of the legislative, policy and program reforms of the past four decades, including their impact on what community resources are now available to address intimate partner violence, where they are available, and for whom.

Intimate Partner Homicide & the Courts

Dawson (2013)

Intimate partner homicide & the courts

Research question: Has the treatment of those accused of killing intimate partners changed over time?

Data: Total population of homicide cases resolved through the courts in Toronto, 1974-2002 (N=1,137)

- Intimate partner homicides (N=230; 20%)
- Non-intimate partner homicides (N=907; 80%)

Intimate partner homicide & the courts

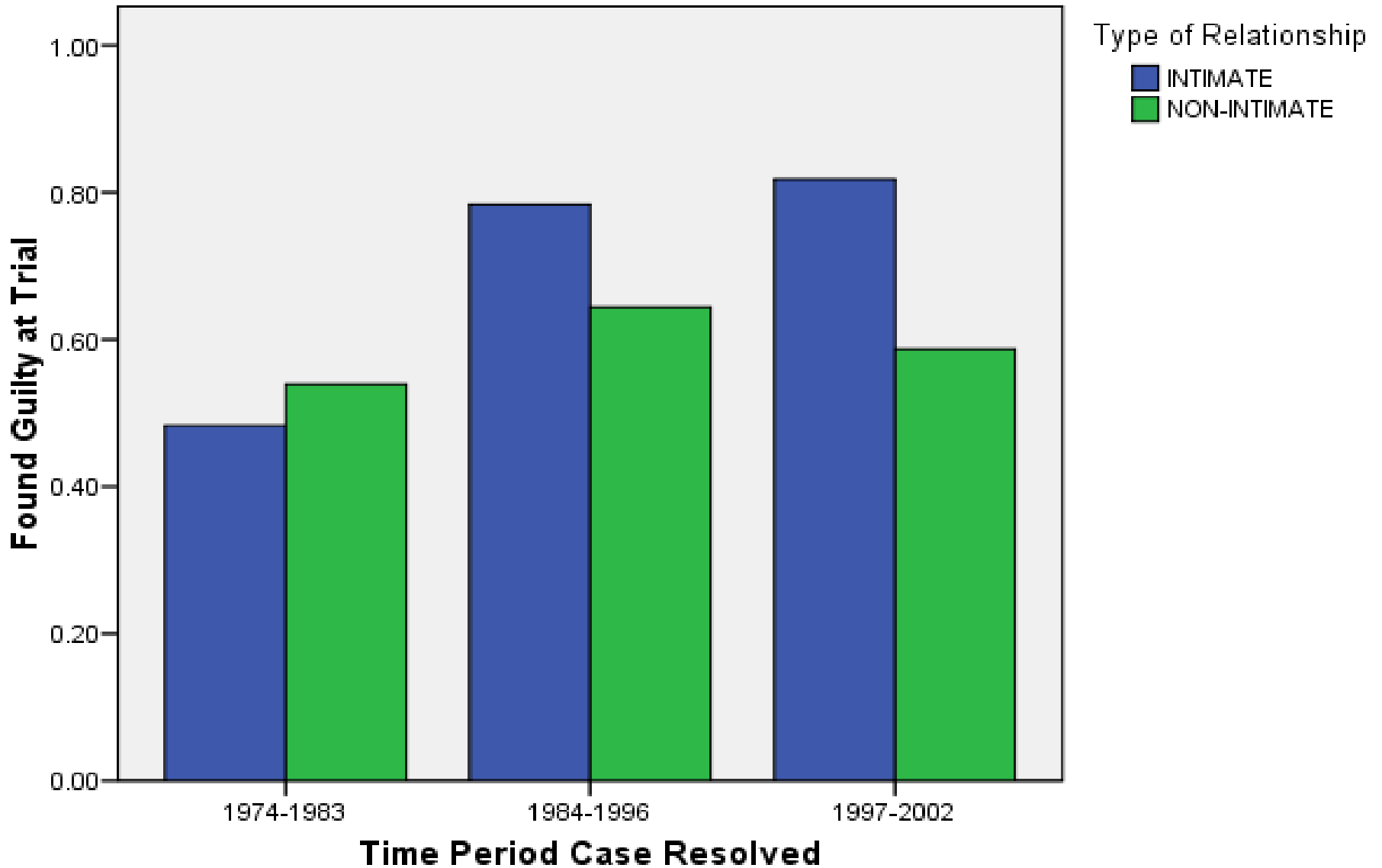
Compared early time period (1974-1983) to more recent time periods (1984-1996 and 1997-2002)

Changes over time? YES

In recent years, intimate partner killers were...

➤ **More likely to be found guilty at trial;**
...compared to killers of other types of victims.

Percent Found Guilty at Trial by Relationship Type for Three Time Periods



Changes over time?

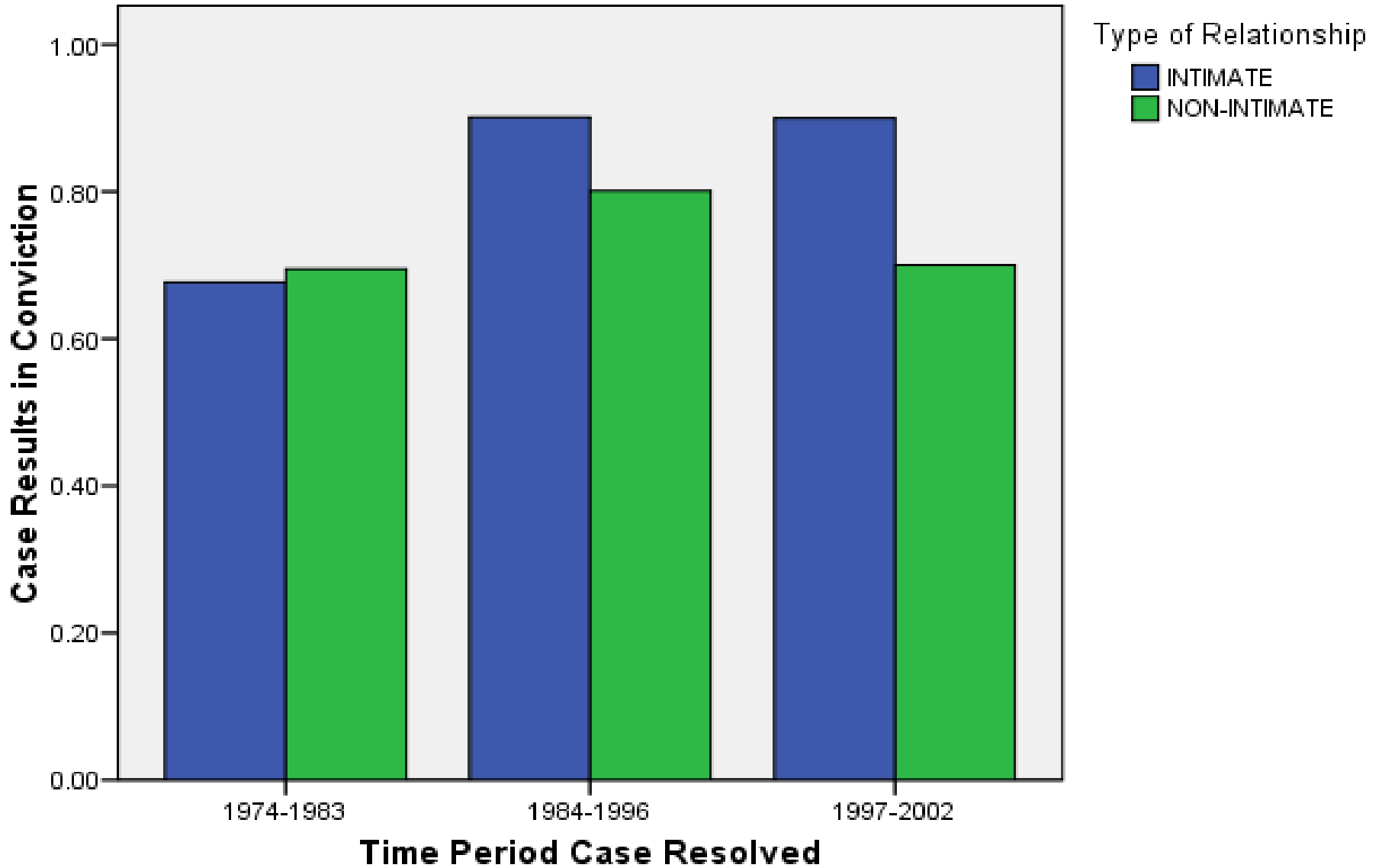
Compared early time period (1974-1983) to more recent time periods (1984-1996 and 1997-2002) and found that:

In recent years, intimate partner killers were...

- More likely to be found guilty at trial;
- **More likely to be convicted overall;**

...compared to killers of other types of victims

Percent Convicted by Relationship Type for Three Time Periods



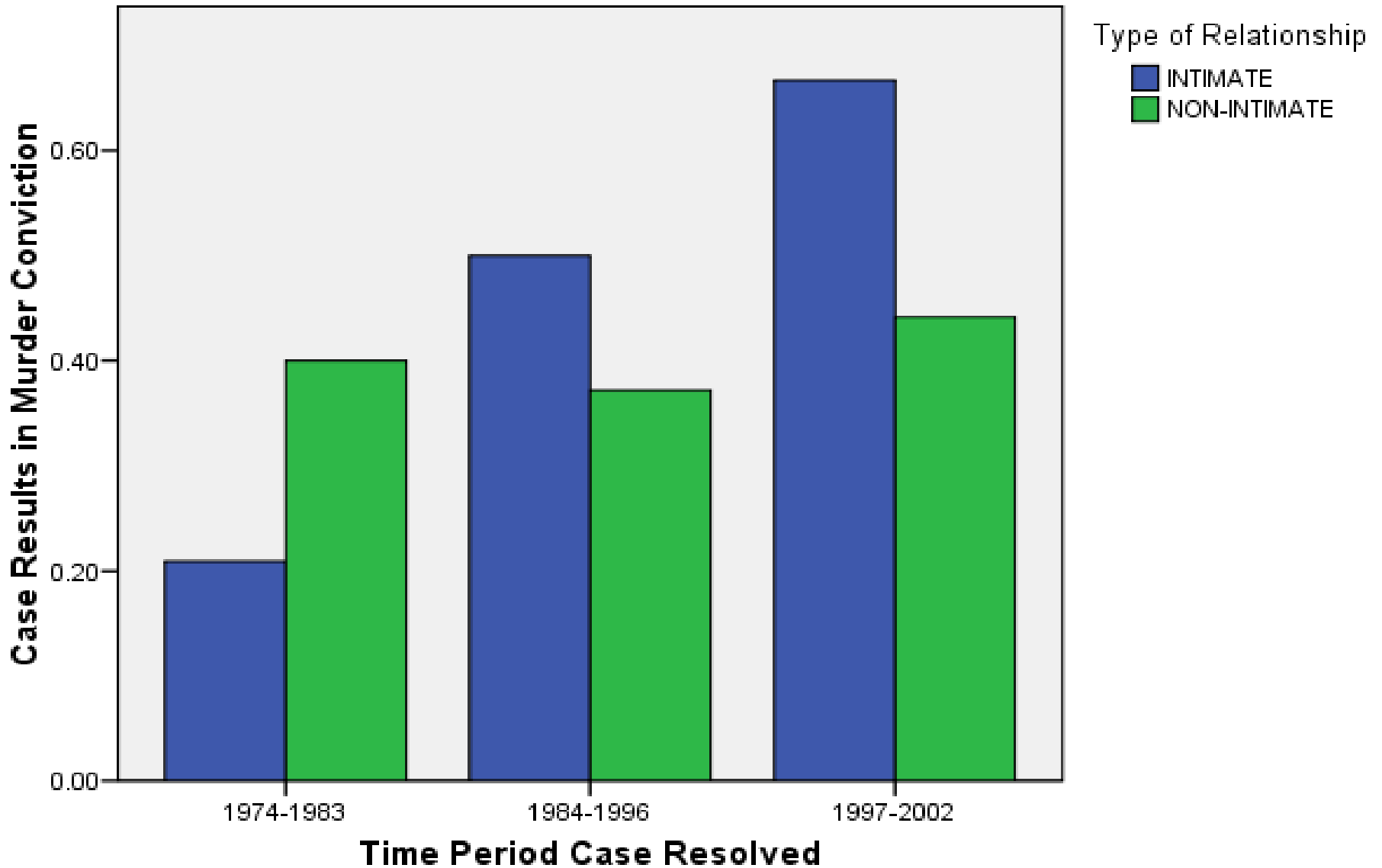
Changes over time?

Compared early time period (1974-1983) to more recent time periods (1984-1996 and 1997-2002) and found that:

In recent years, intimate partner killers were...

- More likely to be found guilty at trial;
 - More likely to be convicted overall;
 - **More likely to be convicted of murder**
- ...compared to killers of other types of victims

Percent Convicted of Murder Relationship Type for Three Time Periods



Back to our three scenarios...

- (1) A stranger enters a woman's home; after a struggle, he pulls out a gun and shoots her;
- (2) A man enters the home of a woman, his estranged female partner; there is a struggle and he pulls out a gun and shoots her;
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Stereotype #1:

Crime of passion? Or premeditation?

Data: 54 cases IPH & 54 cases non-IPH matched according to legal criteria, examined for evidence of premeditation (Dawson 2006)

Examples of indicators used:

- Accused purchased gun prior to homicide
- Accused followed/laid in wait for victim
- Accused abducted/lured victim to location where homicide occurred

Results: Premeditation or passion?

Evidence of premeditation or intent:

- 41% of intimate partner homicides (22/54)
- 31% of non-intimate partner homicides (17/54)

Impact on sentences:

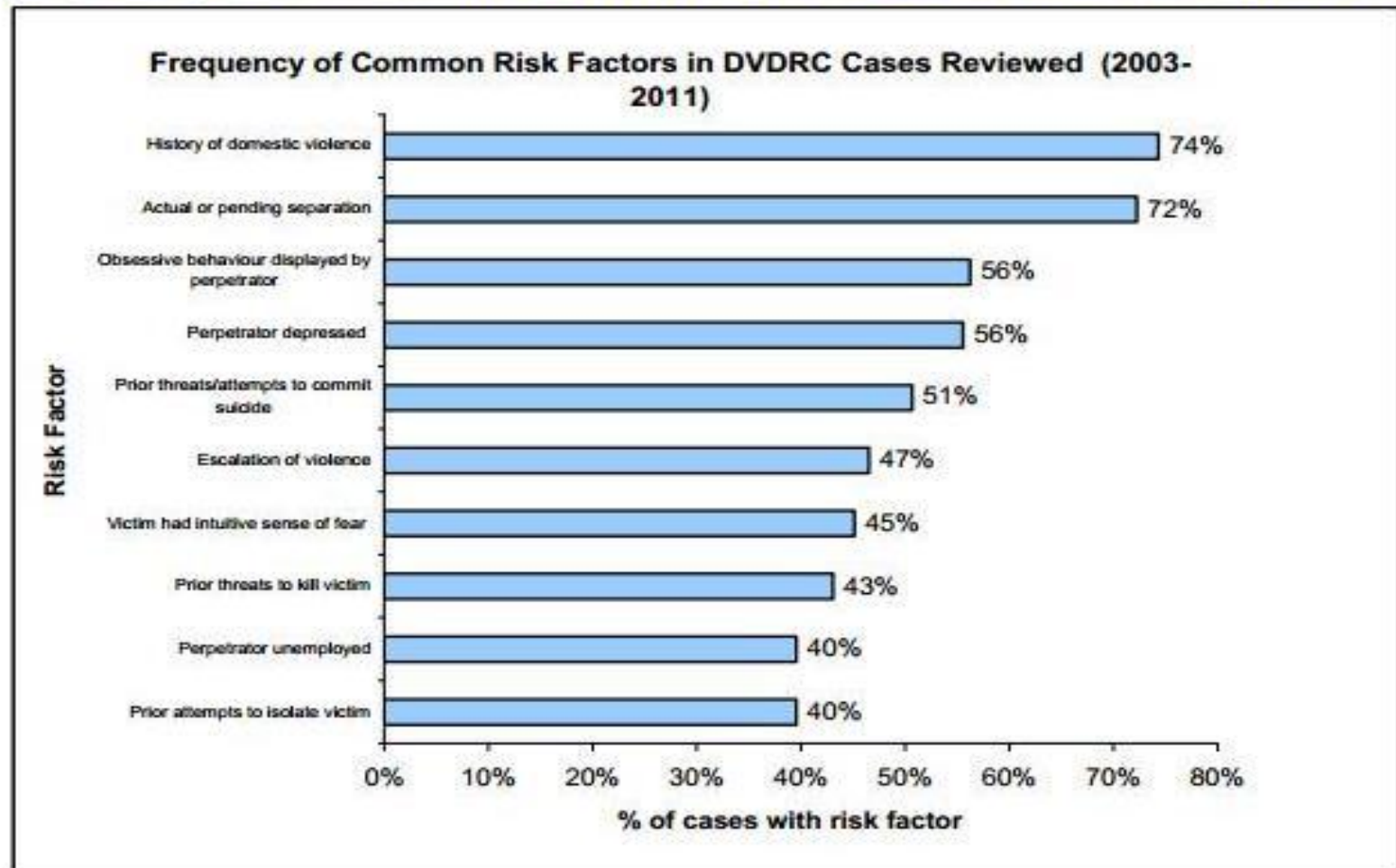
Intimate partner killers received shorter sentences in 44% of cases and similar sentences in 32% of cases than other types of killers.

Stereotype #2: She could just leave, right?

- ‘Why didn’t she just leave?’ continues to be the most frequently asked question;
- This attitude appears to have become more rather than less prevalent with growth in domestic violence resources;
 - ...despite our knowledge of inequitable access to resources;
 - ...despite our knowledge that leaving will often increase her risk rather than decrease it.

Chart Four:

Frequency of Common Risk Factors in DVDRC Cases Reviewed (2003-2011)



Court outcomes for separation & intact killers

Data: 144 cases of intimate femicide, 1874-1996, Toronto, Ontario (Dawson, 2003)

Finding: Male offenders who killed estranged female partners treated more severely than those who killed their current female partners by about 2 years.

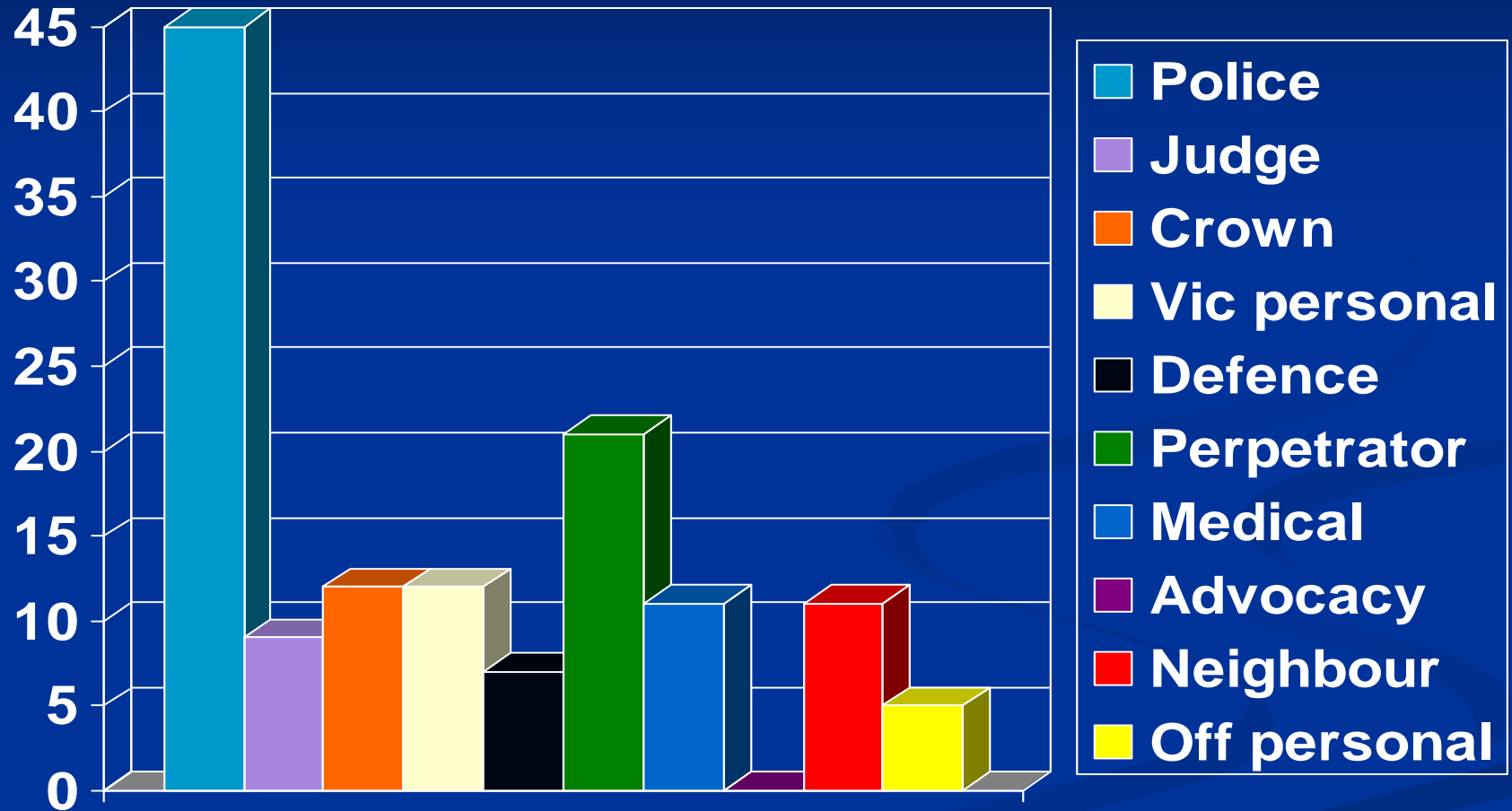
One explanation: “We assume that the victim possessed some degree of control over the circumstances of his or her victimization, which puts THE homicide in less frightening light and diminishes degree of punishment that seems appropriate.” (Rapaport 1991)

Second Key Challenge: Combating stereotypes

Key question: Whose knowledge is it anyway?

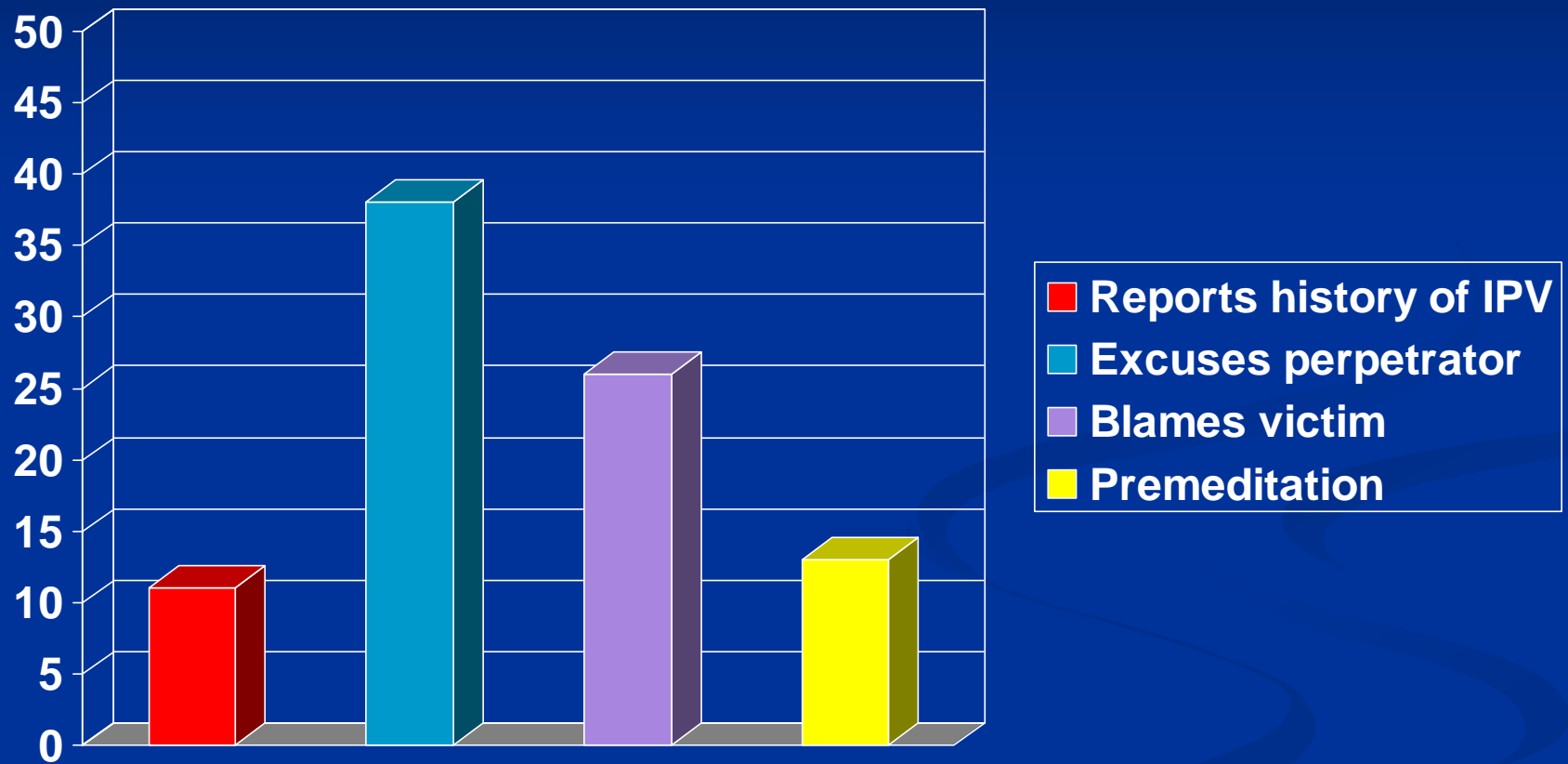
- ‘Our’ knowledge currently resides among a small group of people and has yet to penetrate larger society.
- Media can help transfer our knowledge to the general public, but it is not being used as a vehicle of change.

News sources used



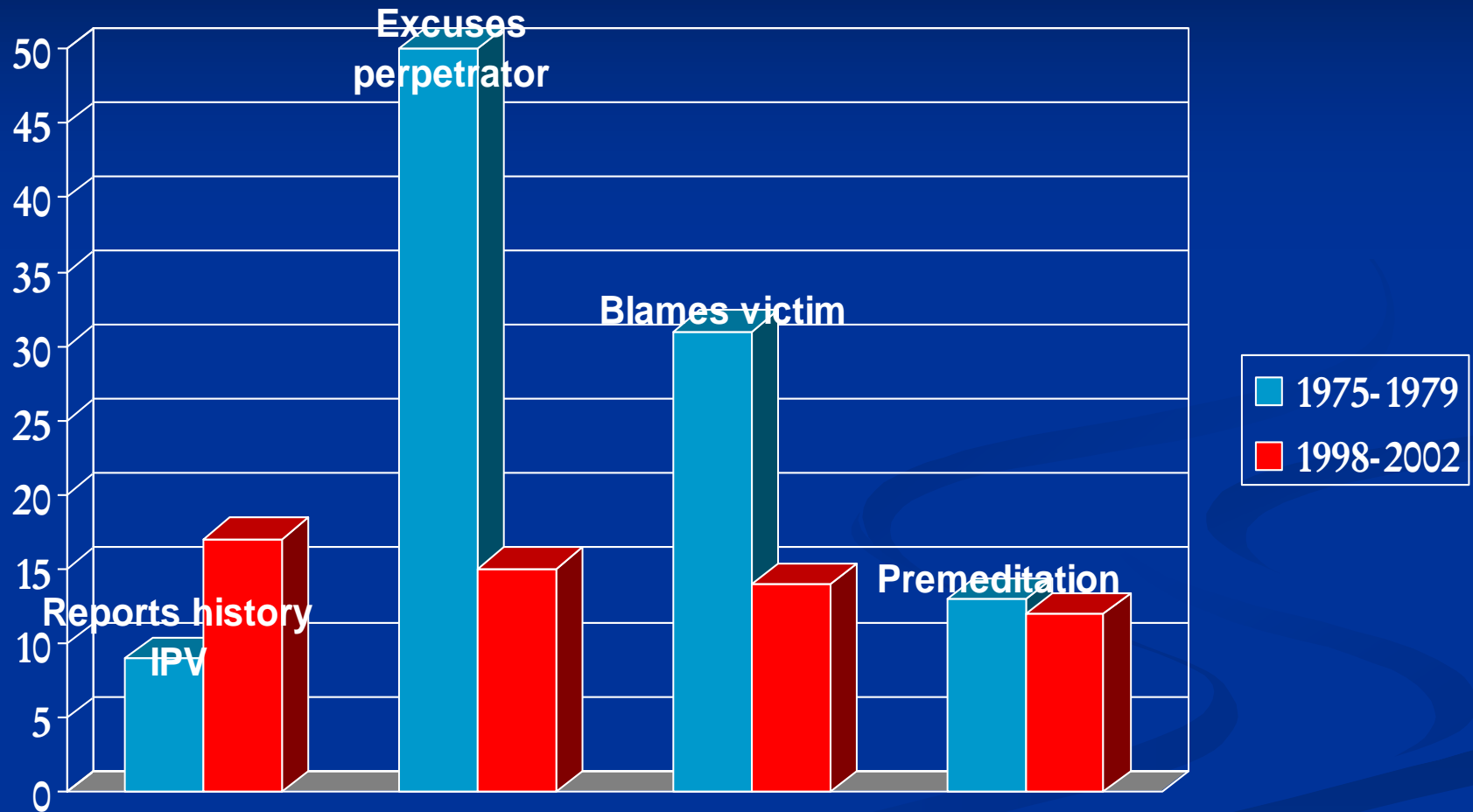
[Fairbairn, 2009; Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013]

Constructing IPH



[Fairbairn, 2009; Fairbairn & Dawson, 2013]

Constructing IPH over time



The next 40 years...

➤ Two key objectives:

- 1) Understanding the validity of stereotypes and challenging their role in our response to domestic violence.
- 2) Understanding and documenting the impact of the past 40 years of change, identifying whether and what changes have worked and why as well as those that have been ineffective for whom and why?

Thank you!

For more information:

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Centre for the Study of Social &
Legal Responses to Violence

Website: www.violenceresearch.ca