

**Three decades of policy change:  
What has been the impact for victims of  
intimate partner violence & homicide?**

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## Consider the following 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;
- (3) A man and a woman – husband and wife – are at home; there is a struggle, he gets his gun and shoots her.

# What has changed in the Canadian context?

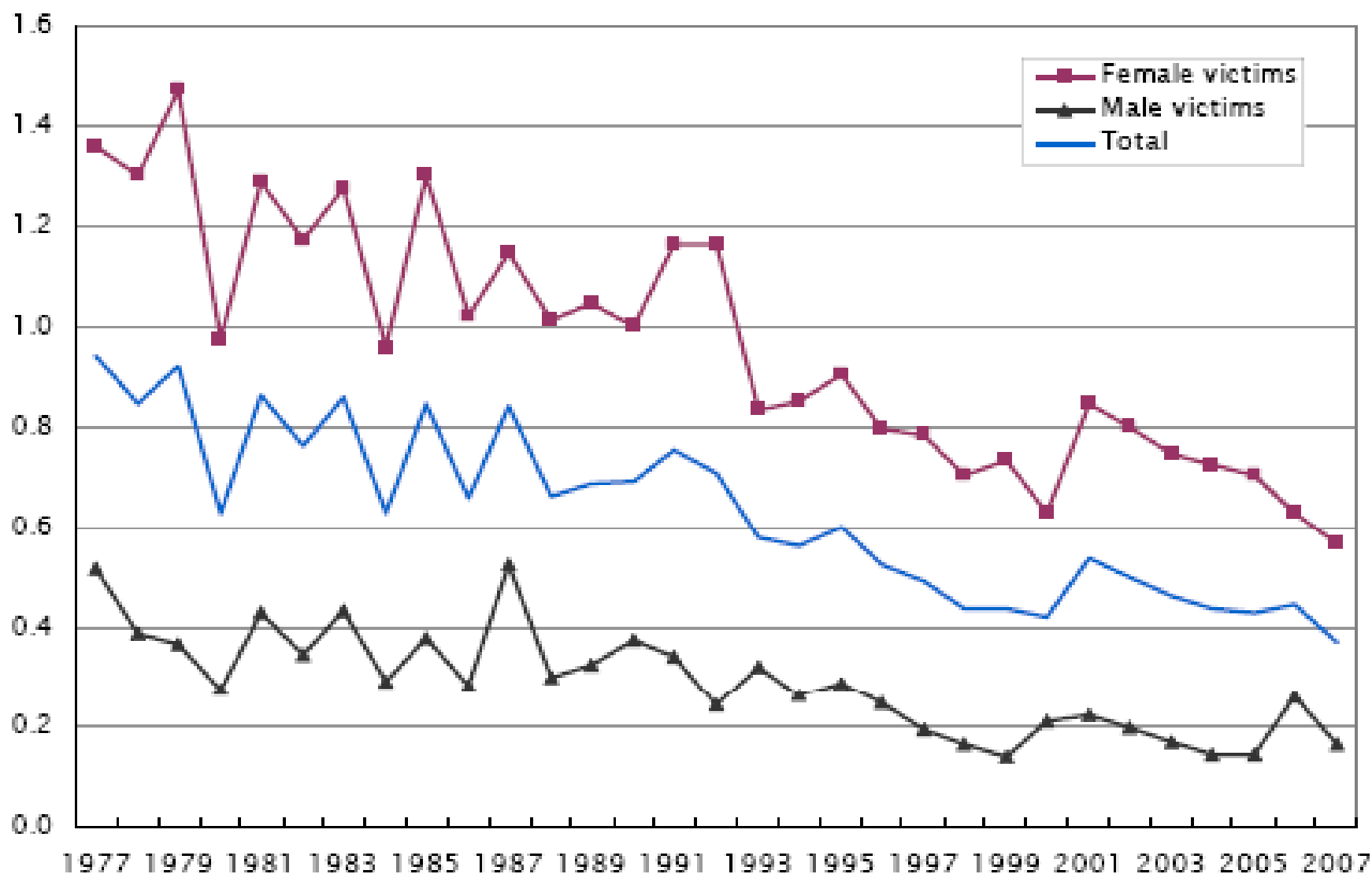
- (1) Key legislative and policy changes
- (2) Trends in and characteristics of intimate partner homicide
- (3) Examining criminal justice responses to intimate partner homicide over three decades
- (4) Two key challenges/ solutions for moving forward

## Key legislative & policy initiatives of the past several decades

- '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 8 Spousal homicide rate is now at its lowest since the mid-1960s

rate per 100,000 spouses

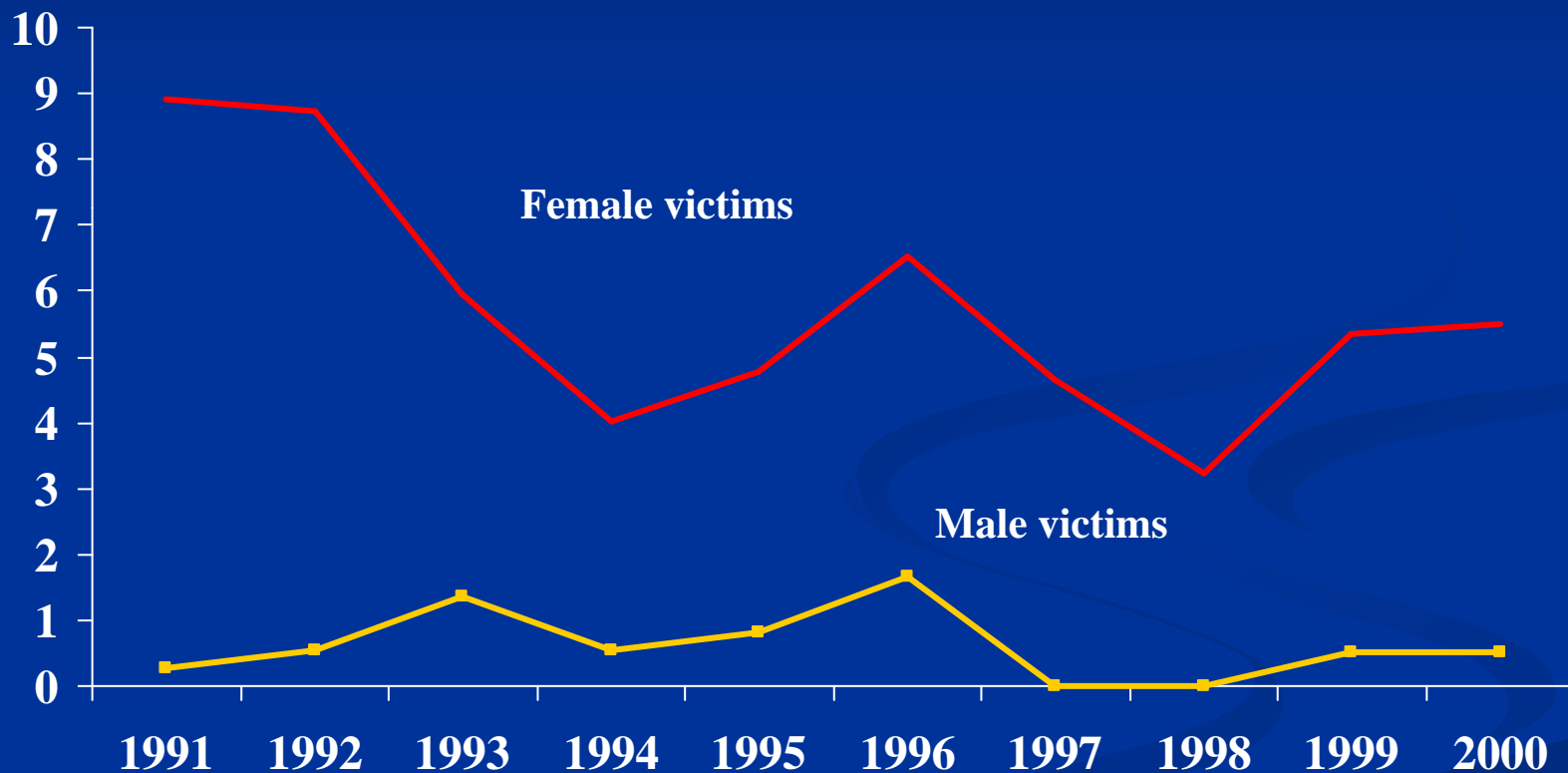


Notes: Spouses include legally married, common-law, separated, and divorced persons age 15 years or older. Excludes same-sex spouses due to the unavailability of Census data on same-sex couples.

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

# Intimate partner homicides, 1991-2000

Rates per million pop. 15+



Source: Homicide Survey

# Linking social & legal changes to declines...

## Exposure Reduction Framework...

...identifies three key changes that may have reduced exposure:

- Increasing gender equality
- Changing relationship structures
- Increases in available domestic violence resources and services

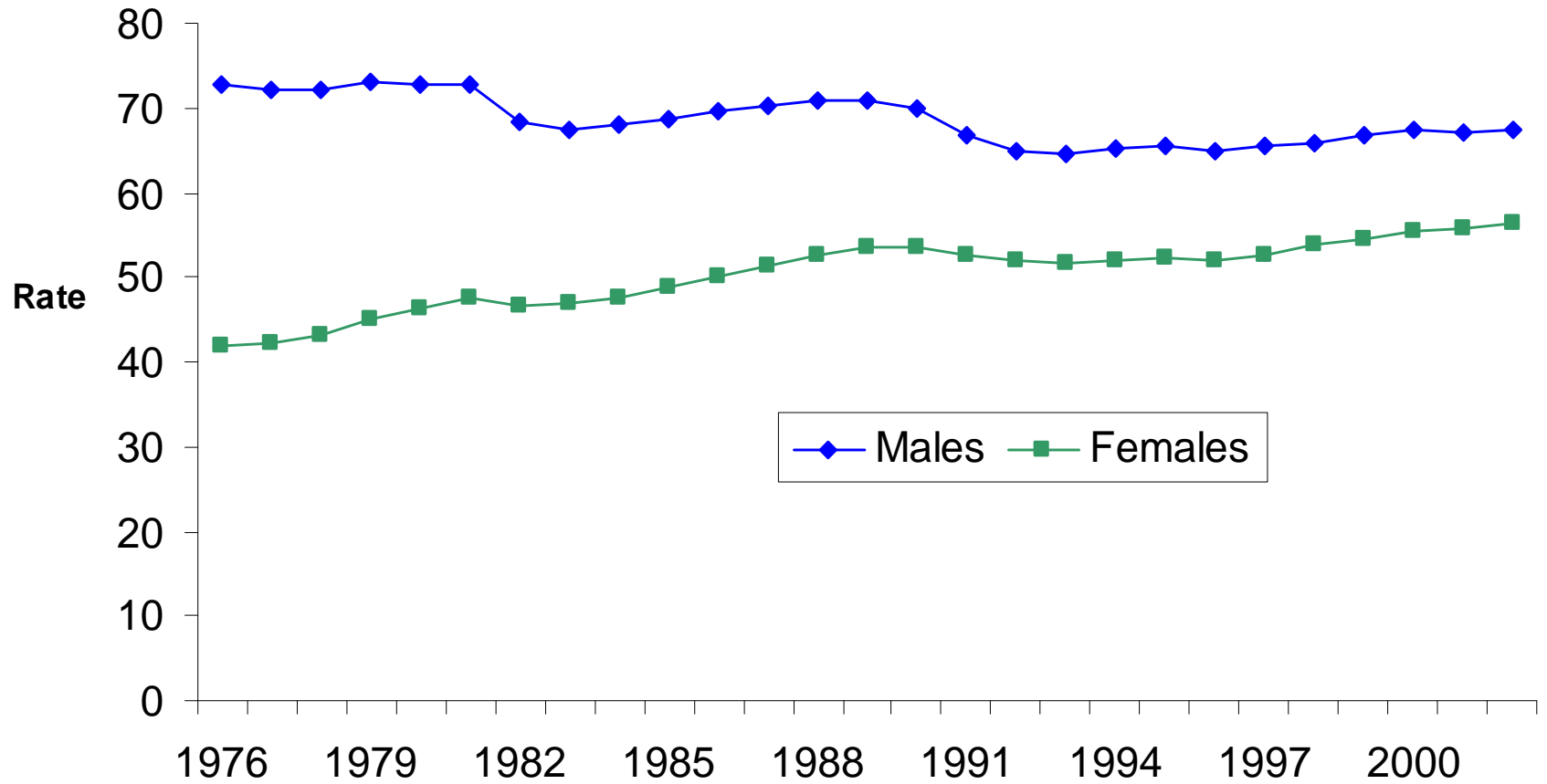
(Dugan et al. 1999, 2003)

# The role of exposure reduction in Canada

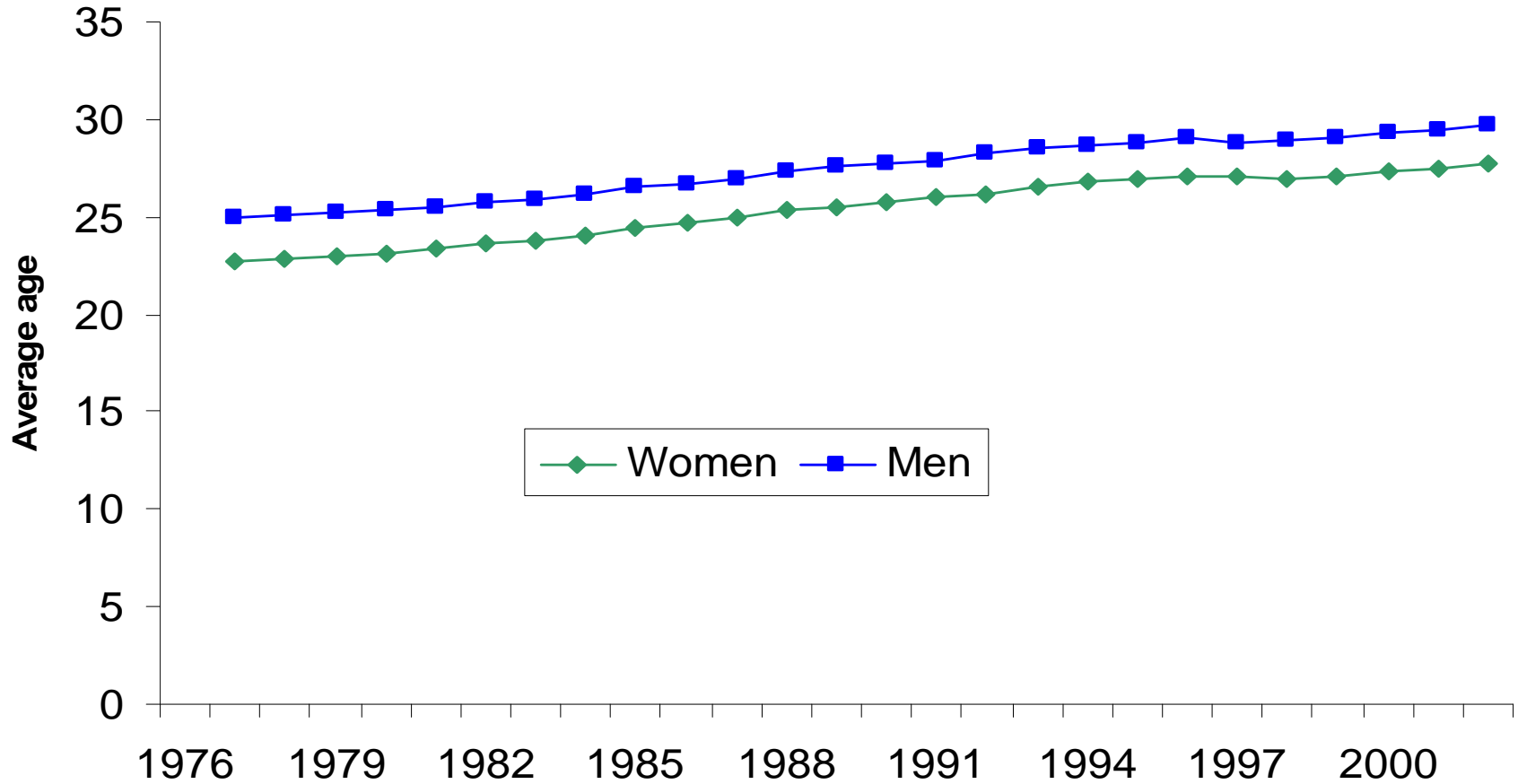
Preliminary findings: (Dawson et al. 2009)

**#1:** As the female-male employment gap decreased, the rate at which women were killed by male spouses also decreased;

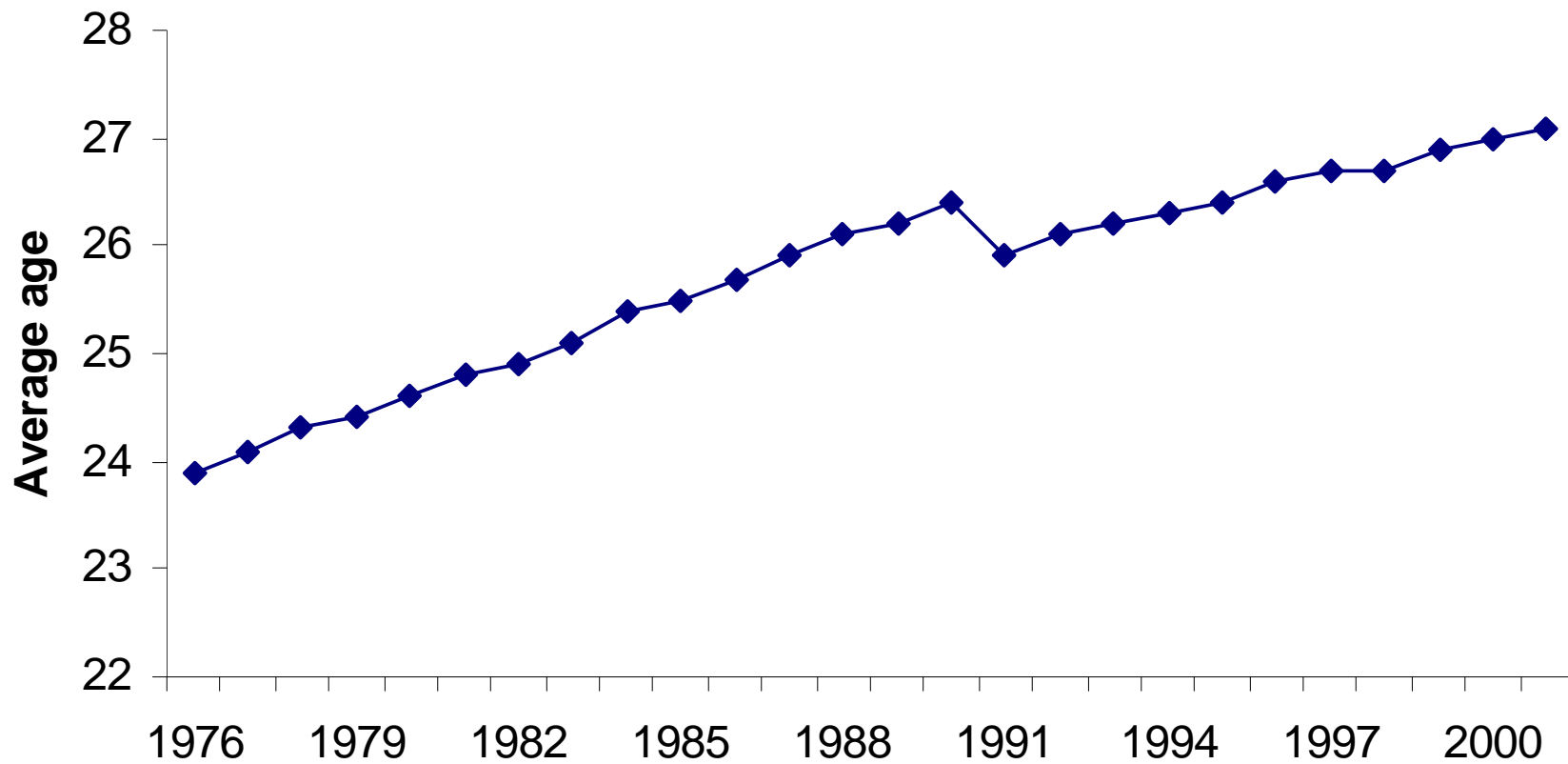
## Employment rate of Canadians, 15 years and over, 1976-2001



## Average age at first marriage, 1976 - 2001, Canada



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



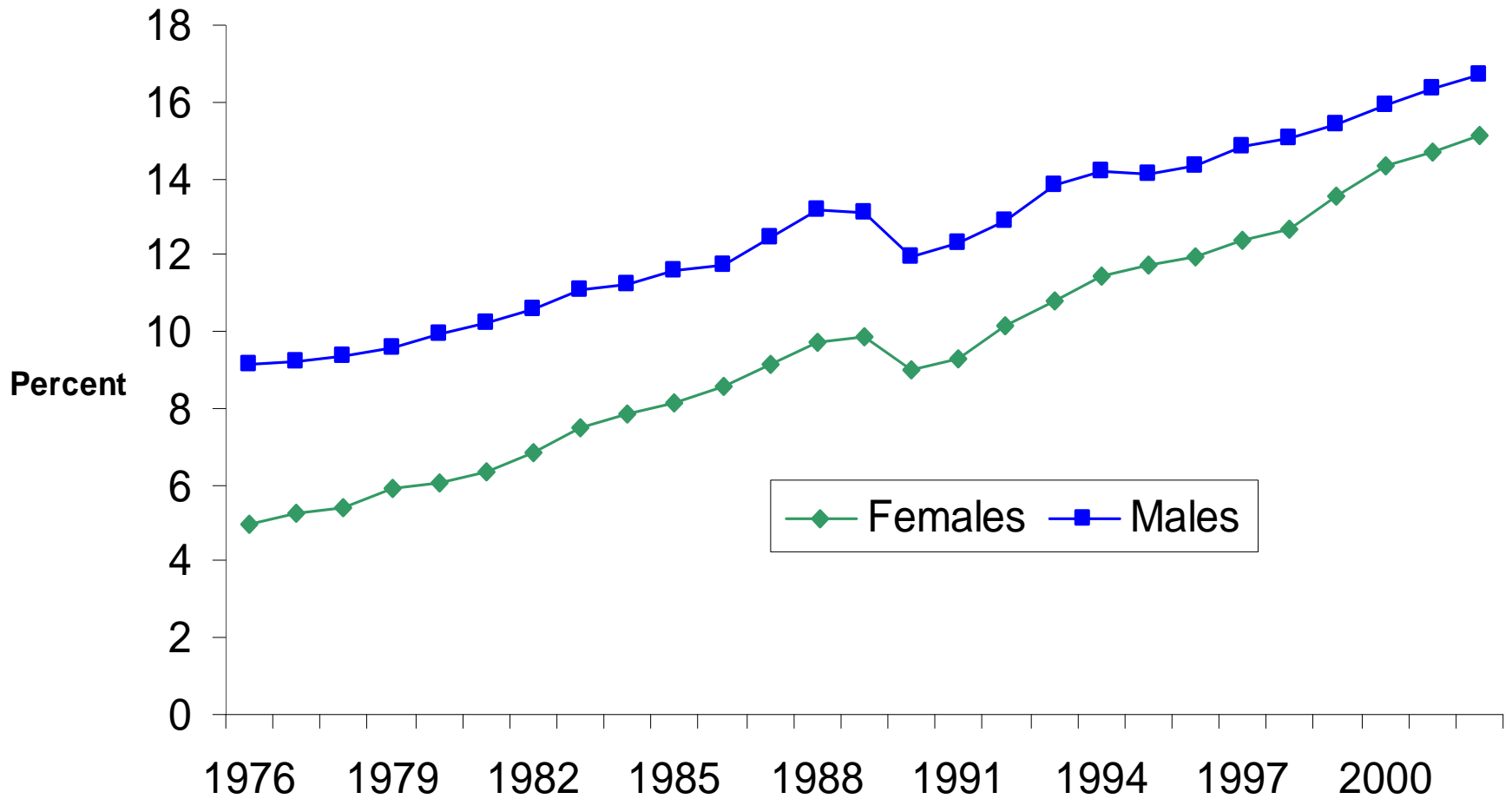
# The role of exposure reduction in Canada

Three preliminary findings: (Dawson et al. 2009)

**#1:** As female-male employment gap decreased, the rate at which women are killed by male spouses also decreased

**#2:** As the level of university education increased for males, the rate at which men were killed by female spouses decreased

## Percentage of population with university, 1976-2001, Canada



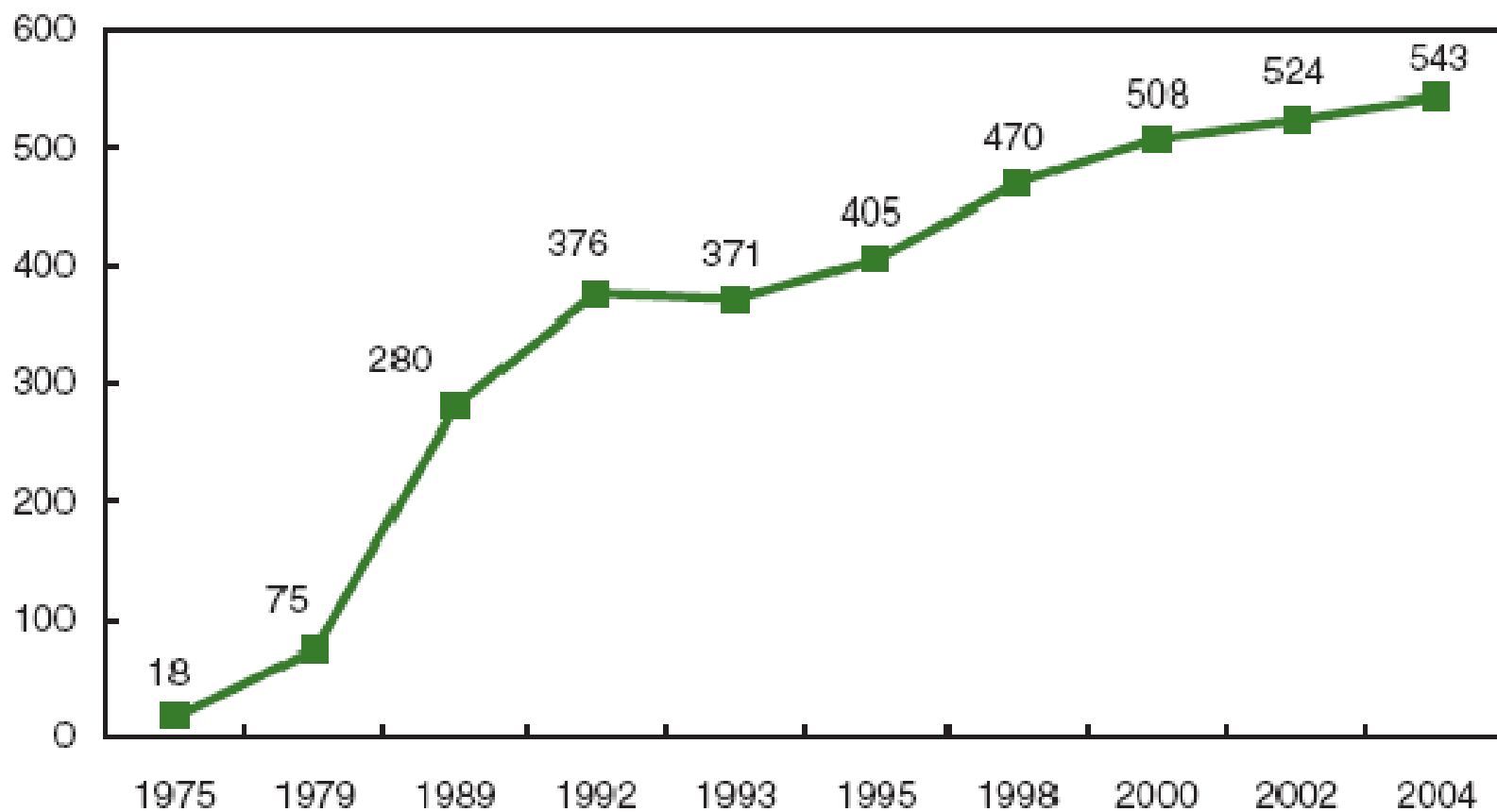
# The role of exposure reduction in Canada

Three preliminary findings: (Dawson et al. 2009)

- #1:** As female-male employment gap decreased, the rate at which women are killed by male spouses decreased.
- #2:** As level of university education increased for males, the rate at which men killed by female spouses decreased.
- #3:** As divorce rates increased so too did male and female rates of spousal homicide.

**Figure 32**  
**Change in the number of shelters**

Number of shelters

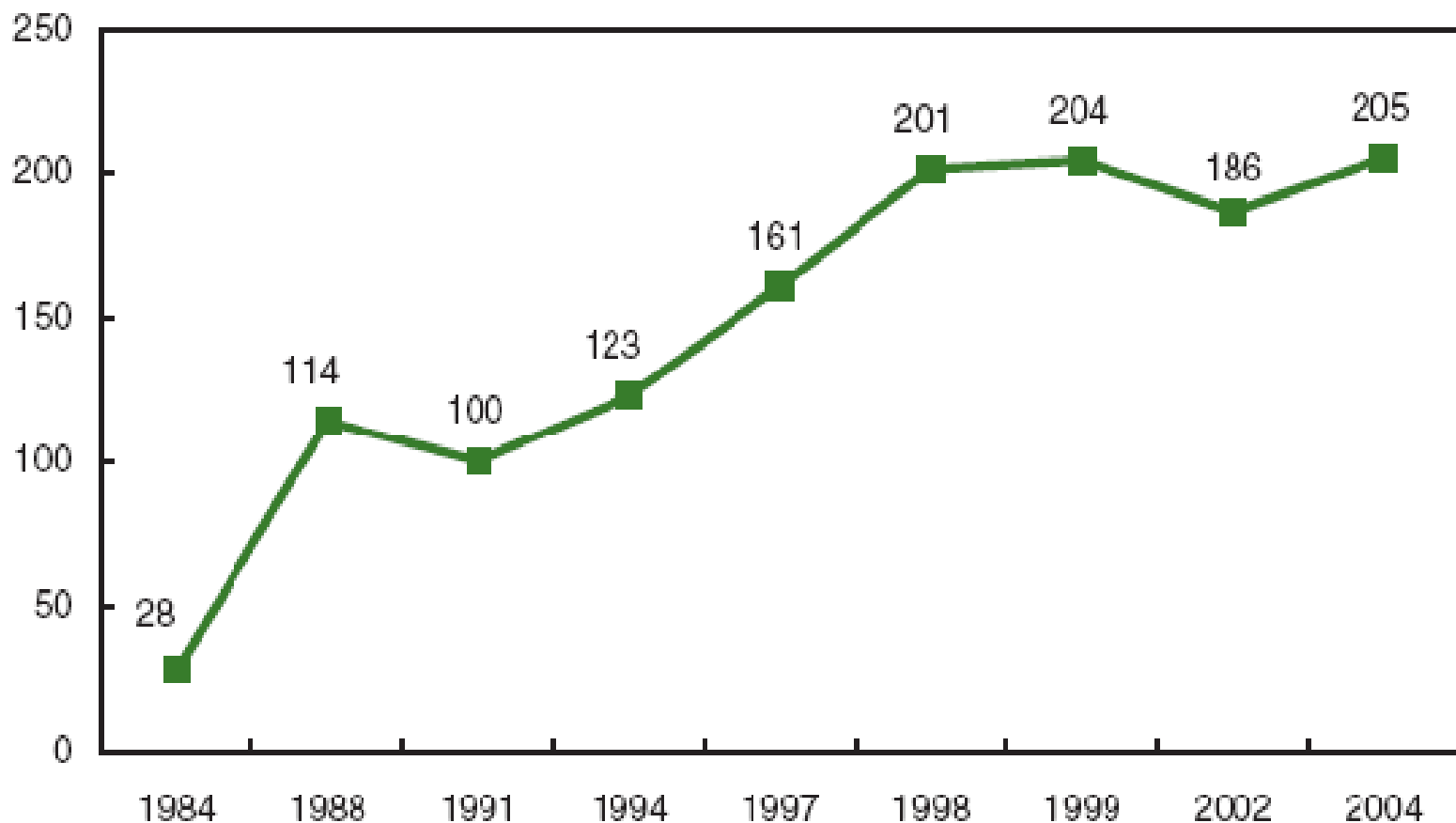


Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Transition Home Survey.

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.

# Domestic violence resources and declines

- Obstacle to answering the question: Lack of data on growth and existence of resources/services;
- What do we mean when we talk about ‘domestic violence resources’?
- Is it only *availability* of resources that matter?  
What about the *quality* of what’s available?  
What about *accessibility* and *utilization* of services/resources?

# Intimate Partner Homicide and the Courts

## Research question and data

**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%)

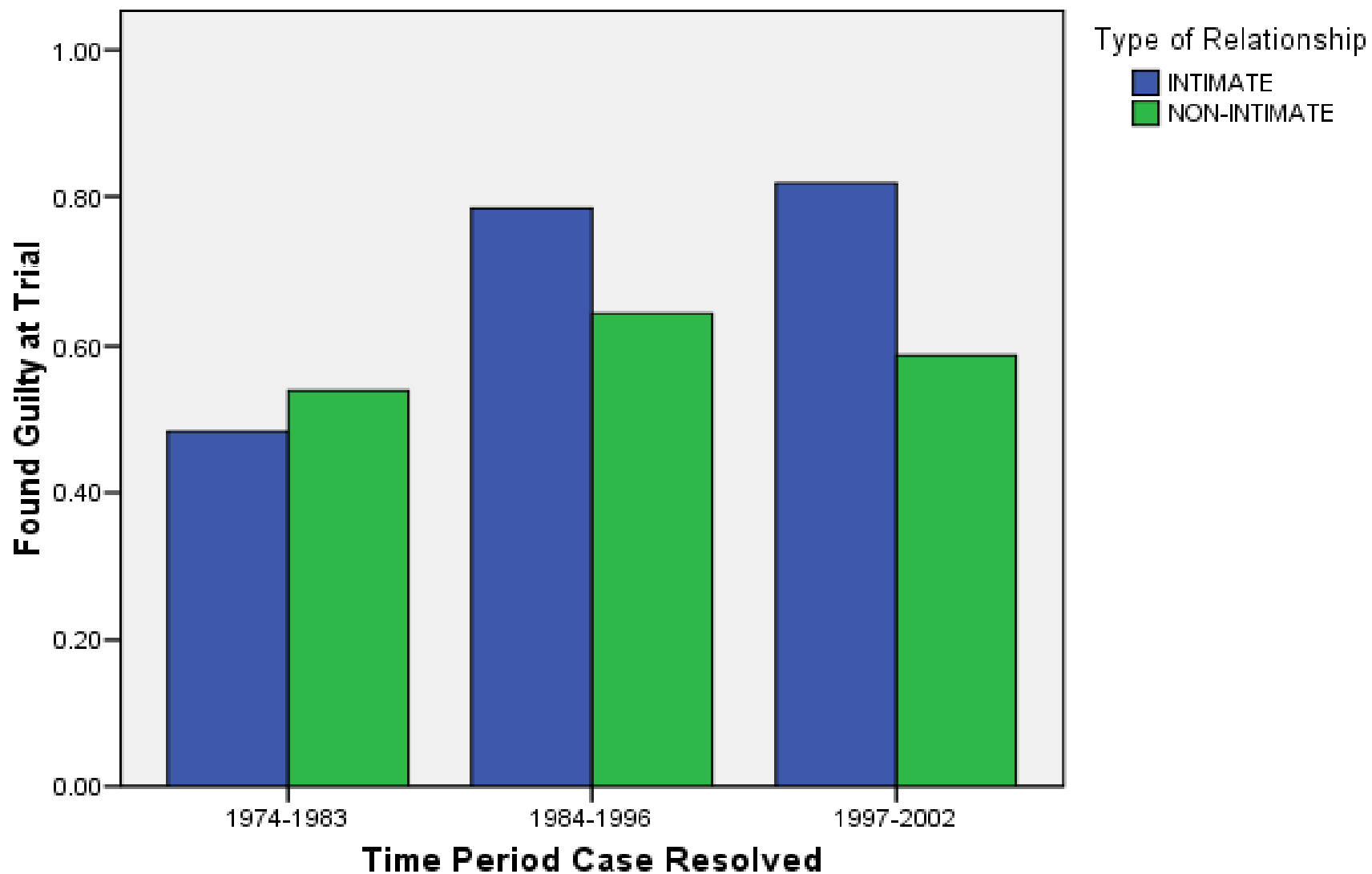
Compared early time period (1974-1983) to more recent time periods (1984-1996 and 1997-2002)

## 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?

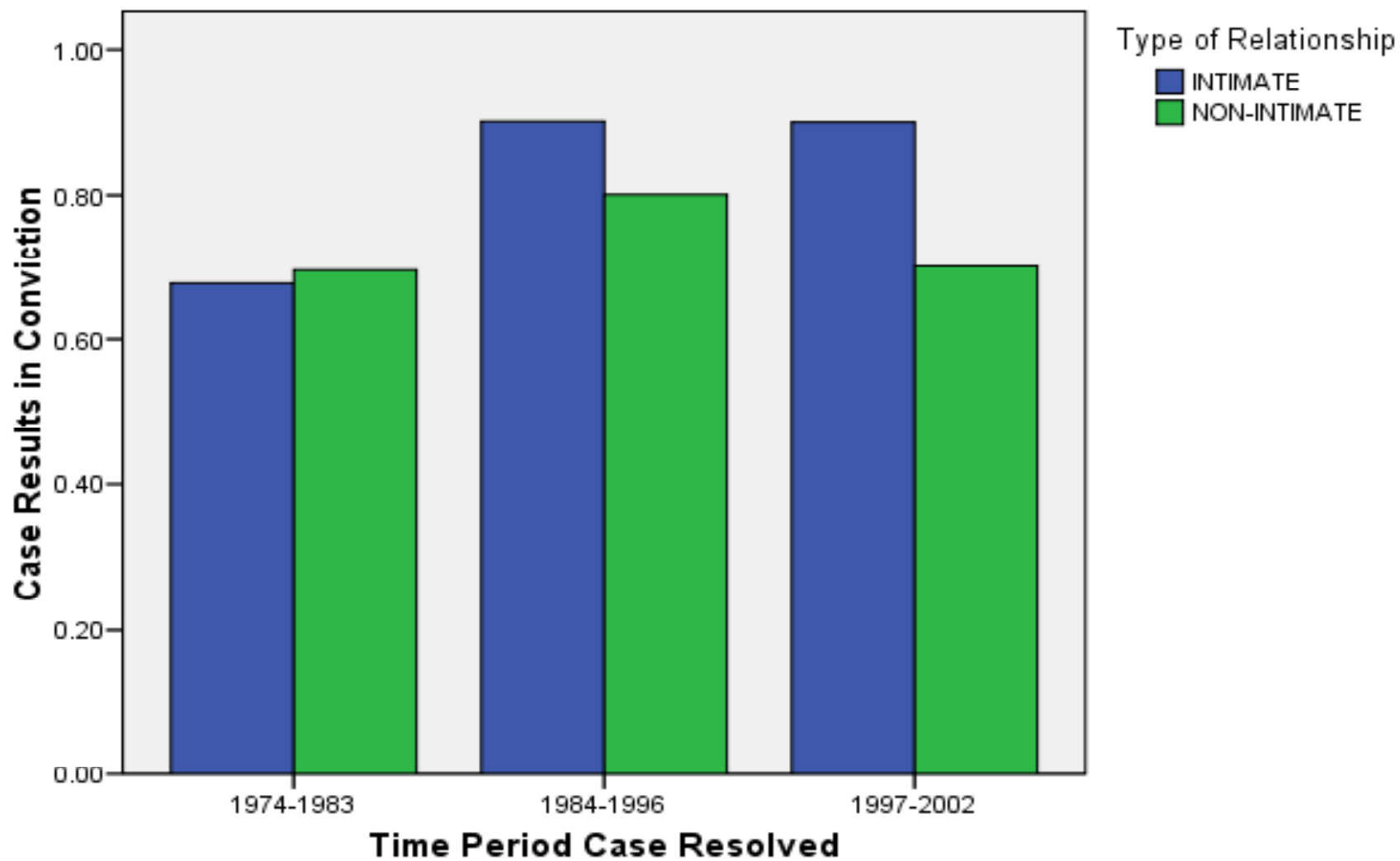
Compared early time period (1974-1983) to more recent time periods (1984-1996 and 1997-2002) and found that:

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?

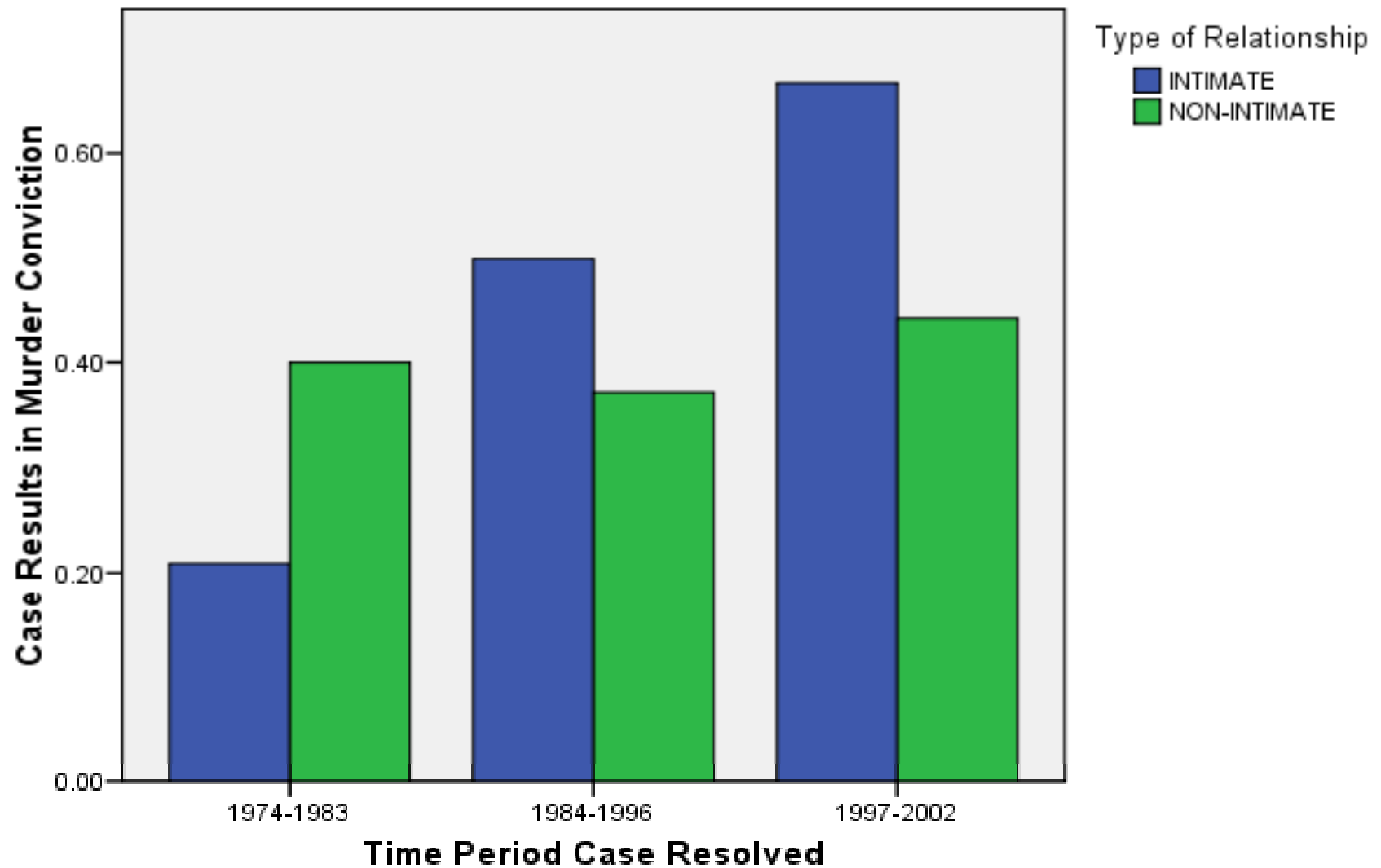
Compared early time period (1974-1983) to more recent time periods (1984-1996 and 1997-2002) and found that:

In recent years, intimate partner killers were...

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

...compared to killers of other types of victims

## Percent Convicted of Murder Relationship Type for Three Time Periods



## Challenge/Solution #1:

To recognize stereotypes & challenge them

**Question:** Are persistent stereotypes about intimacy and violence valid?

**Stereotype:** Intimate partner homicides are typically spontaneous 'crimes of passion'

**Valid?** If above is true, one would expect less evidence of premeditation and/intent in cases of intimate partner homicide than in other types of homicide.

# Crimes of passion?

**Data:** 54 cases IPH & 54 cases non-IPH matched according to legal criteria and examined for evidence of premeditation/intent.

## **Some 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: Crimes of passion?

### Evidence of premeditation or intent in:

- 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 & similar sentences in 32% of cases compared to the other killers.

## **Challenge/Solution #2: Achieving the 3Cs**

**A need for increased levels of communication,  
cooperation & collaboration:**

- **Among criminal justice actors & community-based services...**  
**...the case of risk assessment and the 3Cs.**

## Challenge/Solution #2: Achieving the 3Cs

- Among governments & academics/researchers
  - Canadian Observatory on the Justice System  
Response to Intimate Partner Violence  
[e.g. [www.unb/observ](http://www.unb/observ)]

Thank you!

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