

January 19, 2007 Friday  
FINAL EDITION

## Domestic violence spike tied to better reporting

**BYLINE:** BY KELLY PEDRO, FREE PRESS REPORTER

**SECTION:** CITY & REGION; Pg. B1

**LENGTH:** 329 words

Domestic violence is soaring in London and increasingly it involves weapons.

Just-released statistics show incidents in 2006 increased 12 per cent over 2005, mirroring a national trend. Assaults involving a weapon or bodily harm made up 24 per cent of that increase, jumping to 113 cases in London from 91.

"Weapons are almost always available, particularly if the incident happens in the home," said Deputy Police Chief Ian Peer.

Domestic sexual assaults rose 71 per cent, to 41 in 2006 from 24 in 2005. There also were significant increases in charges involving harassing phone calls and failure to attend court.

But one expert said the increase isn't in domestic violence, but in people's willingness to report the crime.

In the early 1990s, only 25 per cent of women called police to report domestic violence, but that jumped to 33 per cent in 2002, said **Peter Jaffe**, academic director at Western's Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children.

"Clearly women are calling police more often and calling earlier. They're not waiting until they've been assaulted dozens of times," he said.

The numbers also could be going up because there are more resources available to abused women and more education, said Kate Wiggins, executive director of Women's Community House.

Programs such as Neighbours, Friends and Families -- launched last month -- aim to educate people about how to talk to women in abusive relationships, and the men who abuse them about how to get help, she said.

Overall, crime increased eight per cent in London in 2006.

Chief Murray Faulkner attributed the increase to proactive policing.

He told the police services board a one-year spike in crime can't be looked at in isolation, and pointed out that from 2000 to 2005, the city's crime rate increased only 0.8 per cent.

But police statistics from 2002 to 2006 -- the most recent five-year period -- show the city's crime rate increased 13.7 per cent, or an average of 2.7 per cent a year.