

The Facts About Sexual Violence

In 2010, victims age 12 or older experienced a total of 188,380 rapes or sexual assaults.²

In 2010, 91.9 percent of rape victims were female. Of these, 48 percent were assaulted by friends or acquaintances, 25 percent by strangers, and 17 percent by intimate partners.³

Nearly one in five women is raped in her lifetime;⁴ one in six men experiences a sexual assault in his lifetime.⁵

Approximately 80 percent of female rape victims were raped before age 25; more than 25 percent of male rape victims were raped by age 10.⁶

Endnotes

¹Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011, *Criminal Victimization*, 2010, Washington, DC.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report, Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

⁵Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000, *Intimate Partner Violence*, Washington, DC.

⁶See *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010 Summary Report*, above.

Resources for Information and Assistance

National Center for Victims of Crime
202-467-8700
www.ncvc.org

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network
1-800-656-HOPE or 1-800-656-4673
www.rainn.org

National Sexual Violence Resource Center
1-877-739-3895
www.nsvrc.org

Directory of Crime Victim Services
Office for Victims of Crime
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice
<http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/findvictimservices>

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OVC HELP SERIES For Crime Victims

Sexual Violence

What Is Sexual Violence?

The term sexual violence encompasses a broad range of unwanted sexual activities, all of which are crimes that have a profound effect on victims. Sexual violence includes sexual assault, rape or attempted rape, child sexual molestation or abuse, incest, statutory rape, spousal or intimate partner rape, fondling, forced or coerced pornography, sex trafficking, and forced or coerced prostitution.

Not all sexual violence includes physical contact. Generally, rape includes penetration with any object, while sexual assault may or may not include penetration and may include emotional rather than physical violence, such as the threat of sexual assault. Many state laws refer to sexual violence as “rape” or “sexual assault.” This brochure uses these terms interchangeably.

Sexual assault can happen to anyone, regardless of age, racial or cultural background, gender identity/ expression, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. Likewise, assailants can be anyone: strangers, acquaintances, friends, family members, intimate partners, and other people in positions of trust, such as clergy. Victims usually know their abuser: In 2010, only 25 percent of reported cases involved strangers.¹

Sex offenders are motivated by the need to control, humiliate, and harm their victims. They may use force, threats, coercion, and manipulation. They may prey on persons who are not free to consent to sexual contact due to mental incapacity, disability, intoxication (voluntary or involuntary), or because the person is under age. Whatever the circumstances, no one asks or deserves to be sexually assaulted.

If You Are a Victim or Survivor

Understand that you are not to blame. No matter who you are, what you say or do, or where you go, you do not deserve to be sexually assaulted.

Rape violates a person’s sense of safety and trust. You may feel shocked or angry that it could happen to you. You may be anxious about your safety and always on your guard. You may feel guilty or ashamed, or that your family and friends blame you for the assault.

Victims often suffer a variety of physical reactions, from changes in eating and sleeping patterns to nightmares or flashbacks. These reactions can cause victims to turn inward, becoming socially withdrawn. It is also common to feel powerless, contributing to depression and a loss of self-worth.

Whatever your reactions or fears, it’s important to understand that they are normal. It’s also important to know that help is available. There are rape crisis centers or sexual assault centers with hotlines and staff trained to support victims and offer resources specific to your needs—whether or not you report the crime

What Support Can You Expect From a Rape Crisis Center or Sexual Assault Program?

Local sexual assault programs have trained, experienced advocates who provide free and confidential services for survivors and those indirectly affected, including family members, intimate partners, and friends. Services may include—

- Providing a comprehensive response to all reports of sexual assault, such as accompanying the victim to the hospital for a sexual assault forensic exam (commonly known as a “rape kit”).

- Serving as a primary resource for clients reporting both recent and past incidents—including crisis intervention and referrals.
- Offering psychological, medical, and legal support and information.
- Helping with emergency housing assistance.

You may be concerned about the financial burden of the crime, but help is available. Your state has a crime victim compensation program that can help with expenses related to the assault. State laws on eligibility for compensation vary. Your local rape crisis center or program can provide information about applying for compensation and inform you of all your rights as a victim of crime.

What Can You Do If You Have Been Sexually Assaulted?

- If you think you are still in danger, get to a safe place. If you are in immediate danger, call 911.
- Call someone you trust for support.
- Seek medical attention where a professionally trained sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) can conduct a health and forensic exam (rape kit). You also may have unseen injuries and need testing and treatment for possible pregnancy and STIs such as HIV/AIDS.
- Ask your local rape crisis center for an advocate to go with you for your exam, and ask about other available services and support.
- If you want to report the crime to police, discuss your options with the advocate or SANE.
- If possible, preserve evidence: Don’t take a shower, use the bathroom, brush your teeth, or comb your hair. Keep the clothes you wore at the time of the attack