

Sexual Assault Fact Sheet

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Many statutes, including Massachusetts, now define sexual assault as nonconsensual sexual contact or penetration by physical force, by threat of bodily harm, or when the victim is incapable of giving consent by virtue of mental illness, mental retardation, intoxication or being under the age of consent (16 years old in Massachusetts). Legally, acquaintance rape carries the same penalties as sexual assault committed by a stranger.

Counting only those rapes that are reported to law enforcement, a forcible rape is committed every 5.8 minutes in the United States.

(Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, 2007)

According to the National Crime Victimization Survey (which collects data on non-fatal violent crimes against persons age 12 or older in the United States), the rate of rape/sexual assault victimization was 1.8 per 1,000 females and 0.2 per 1,000 males in the year 2006. The rate was highest for persons age 16 to 19 (4.3 per 1000).

(Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization 2006", National Crime Victimization Survey 2007)

According to a study by the National Institute of Justice and the Center for Disease Control, 0.3% of female respondents and 0.1 % of male respondents reported that they had been raped in the twelve months prior to the survey. Based on these figures, statisticians estimate that 302,091 women and 92,748 men are raped each year. Because there is an average of 2.9 rapes for every female victim and 1.2 rapes for every male victim, the number of rapes exceeds the number of rape victims. Statisticians estimate that there are 876,064 rapes of women and 11,298 rapes of men each year.

(National Institute of Justice and the Center for Disease Control, "Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequence of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey," 2000, p.13)

Almost 60% of completed campus rapes took place in the victim's residence. Thirty-one per cent took place in other campus living quarters and 10. 3% took place in a fraternity.

(Bureau of Justice Statistics and National Institute of Justice, "The Sexual Victimization of College Women, "2000, p. 18)

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In a nationally representative survey administered between November of 1995 and May of 1996, 17.6% of women and 3% of men reported that they had been the victim of a completed or attempted rape at some time in their lives. Among the women who reported a rape or attempted rape, 21.6% were under age 12 when first victimized and 32.4% were age 12 to 17. Thus 54% of female rape victims were minors at the time of their first rape/attempted rape. Among the men who reported a rape or attempted rape, 48% were under age 12 and 23% were age 12 to 17 at the time of their victimization. Thus, 71 % of male victims were minors at the time of their first rape/attempted rape.

(National Institute of Justice and the Center for Disease Control, "Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequence of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey, 2000, pp. 13, 35)

Sixty-two per cent of rape/sexual assault victims reported that the offender was an intimate partner, relative, friend, or acquaintance. Intimate partners (current or former spouses, boyfriends, or girlfriends) were identified as the offender in 21.4% of rapes/sexual assaults of women. 44.3% of rapes/sexual assaults of women were committed by friends or acquaintances, and 3.2% were committed by relatives.

(Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Criminal Victimization 2006," National Crime Victimization Survey, 2007)

18.3% of women who reported experiencing a rape before the age of 18 also reported experiencing a rape in adulthood, while 8.7% of women who were not raped before the age 18 were raped in adulthood.

(National Institute of Justice and the Center for Disease Control, "Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequence of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey," 2000, p. 39)

12.8% of completed rapes of college women, 35% of attempted rapes of college women, and 22.9% of threatened rapes of college women took place on a date. For both completed and attempted rapes, about 9 out of 10 offenders were known to the victim.

(Bureau of Justice Statistics and National Institute of Justice, "The Sexual Victimization of College Women," 2000, p. 17)

In the nationally representative Survey of Women's Health by the Commonwealth Fund in 1998, women who reported having experienced sexual violence from an intimate partner were 2.8 times more likely than women who had not experienced violence to rate their health as fair or poor.

(Plichta, Stacy B. and Marilyn Falik, "Prevalence of Violence and its Implications for Women's Health," in Women's Health Issues, Vol. 11, No. 3, p. 250)

While women are victims far more often than men, 9.43% of all rapes and sexual assaults – nearly one in ten – happen to men.

(National Crime Victimization Survey, 1996)