



Intimate Partner Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is any act (verbal and/or physical) which breaks a person's trust and/or safety and is sexual in nature. The term "sexual violence" includes: rape, incest, child sexual assault, ritual abuse, date and acquaintance rape, marital or partner rape, sexual contact, sexual harassment, exposure, and voyeurism. Intimate partner rape is the term used to describe sexual acts committed without a person's consent and/or against a person's will, when the perpetrator is the spouse, ex-spouse, live-in partner, or otherwise intimate partner of the victim. This can occur in heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Partner rape (also known as marital, wife, or spousal rape) is obtained by force, threat of force, or when the partner is unable to consent. Partner rapists rape to reinforce their power, dominance, or control over their partner/family, to humiliate the victim, or to express anger. Victims/survivors do not cause their assaults and are not to blame. Offenders are responsible for their assaults.

Perpetrators of intimate partner sexual violence use a variety of methods, which fall on a continuum from coercion to physical force, in order to intimidate their partner into sex. One form of sexual intimidation is social coercion, which is strongly influenced by familial, religious and/or cultural belief systems regarding gender inequality. An example of this form of intimidation includes the belief that a wife is obligated to have sex with her husband, even if it is against her will. Another form of sexual intimidation is interpersonal coercion, which is the use of non-physical threats, such as withholding money in return for sex or threatening to leave the relationship. Threats of physical force, such as making sexual intercourse more painful or threats of death, can also be quite traumatizing, especially when exacerbated by past battering experience. The final method is actual physical force, which includes pushing, punching, burning, using a weapon, and murder.

Partner rape is beginning to receive more and more attention in our society as an unethical, traumatic, and illegal occurrence. Unfortunately, many people are still unaware that partner rape is a crime, because the law has only recently begun to offer protection from sexual violence within intimate relationships. Rape crisis centers, battered women's shelters, and family service agencies across the nation, have become increasingly aware of the needs that are unique to victims/survivors of intimate partner sexual violence and have begun to adapt their services accordingly.

- An estimated 322,230 women were forcibly raped by an intimate in the past year. (Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N. Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. July, 2000.)
- Between one in seven and one in ten married women will experience a rape by her husband. (Mahoney, P., Williams, L. Sexual Assault in Marriage-Prevalence, Consequences, and Treatment of Wife Rape. Partner Violence- A Comprehensive Review of 20 years of Research. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA. 1998.)
- 7.7% of surveyed women and 0.3% of surveyed men reported being raped by a current or former intimate partner at some time in their lifetime. (Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N. Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. July, 2000.)
- Approximately 22% of victims are raped by intimates such as husbands or boyfriends, 47% by acquaintances, and 2 % by other relatives. (Criminal Victimization in 1999: Changes 1998-1999, with Trends 1993-1999. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. August, 2000.)

This information sheet was compiled in 2000 by the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA). WCASA is a membership organization of sexual assault centers, other organizations, and individuals throughout Wisconsin working to end sexual violence. For information sheets on other topics or to become a member, contact WCASA 600 Williamson St., Suite N-2, Madison, WI 53703, (608)257-1516, www.wcasa.org. For more information about sexual assault or to receive support with a sexual assault experience, contact your local sexual assault program. This sheet may be reproduced in its original format only.

- 38% of women surveyed said that they had sex with a husband or intimate partner when they didn't want to. 3% of women were threatened with violence if they didn't have sex, and 8% were coerced into sex after the use of physical force. (Basile, K.C. From Unwanted Sex to Wife Rape: Examining Sexual Coercion in Marriage on a Continuum of Severity. Unpublished Dissertation. 1998.)
- Only 18% of women who were sexually assaulted by a partner, reported the incident to police. (Many Women Do Not Report Sexual Assault by Partner. Annals of Emergency Medicine Vol. 36. Reuters News Service, 2000.)
- 51.2% of the women raped by an intimate said they were victimized multiple times by the same partner. (Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N. Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. July, 2000.)
- Overall female rape victims averaged 4.5 rapes by the same partner. (Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N. Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. July, 2000.)
- Among women who were victimized multiple times by the same partner, 62.6 % of the rape victims said their victimization lasted a year or more. (Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N. Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. July, 2000.)
- On average women who were raped multiple times by intimates said their victimization occurred over 3.8 years. (Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N. Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. July, 2000.)
- 36.2% of the women raped by an intimate since age 18 sustained an injury other than the rape itself during their most recent victimization. (Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N. Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. July, 2000.)
- 29% of the women injured during their most recent intimate partner rape received some type of medical care. (Many Women Do Not Report Sexual Assault by Partner. Annals of Emergency Medicine Vol. 36. Reuters News Service, 2000.)
- The vast majority of the reported intimate partner rapes were reported within 24 hours. Most of the reports were made by the victim, rather than a friend, relative, or other third party. (Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N. Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. July, 2000.)
- When asked why they chose not to report their victimization to the police, 21.2% of the female rape victims said they were afraid that their attacker would retaliate, 20.3% said the rape was a one time or minor incident. In addition, 16% said they were too ashamed or wanted to keep the incident private, and 13% said the police could not do anything. (Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N. Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. July, 2000.)
- Only 7.5% of women who were raped by an intimate said their attacker was criminally prosecuted. (Tjaden, P., Thoennes, N. Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. July, 2000.)
- 52% of participants in a study of sexual coercion in Gay/Lesbian relationships reported at least one incident of sexual assault/coercion. (Waldner-Haugrud, L., Vaden Gratch, L. Sexual Coercion in Gay/Lesbian Relationships: Descriptives and Gender Differences. Violence and Victims. Vol. 12 (1), 87-98. 1997.)
- 38% of ever-married females with disabilities experienced sexual violence by their partner. (Statistics Canada, Centre for Justice Statistics. Harm's Way: The Many Faces of Violence and Abuse Against Persons with Disabilities. Ontario: Roeher Institute. 1995.)