

SEXUAL ASSAULT OF ADOLESCENTS AND TEENS

Sexual assault is a crime committed overwhelmingly against young girls and adolescent women. High school and college aged women are the most vulnerable for date or acquaintance rape.

Teens and adolescents, especially adolescent women, are at greater risk for sexual assault than any other age group.

- Between 1/3 and 2/3 of sexual assault victims are age 15 and younger. (*Population Reports: Ending Violence Against Women*. 2000)
- Approximately one in five female high school students reports being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner. (*Dating Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Associated Substance Use, Unhealthy Weight Control, Sexual Risk Behavior, Pregnancy, and Suicidality*. Journal of the American Medical Association, Vol. 286, No. 5)
- The National Violence Against Women Survey found that of the women who reported being raped at some time in their lives, 21.6% were under the age of 12 years old, 32.4% were 12-17 years old, and 29% were 18-24 years old when they were first raped. This translates to 54% of women victims who were under 18 at the time of the first rape. (*Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. November 1998.)
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice, young women between the ages of 16 and 24 are the most vulnerable to intimate partner violence. The average rate of intimate partner violence against all women was 6 assaults per 1,000 in 1999. That same year for women age 16-24, the average was 16 victimizations per 1,000 women. (*Intimate Partner Violence and Age of Victim, 1993-99*. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. October 2001.)

Teenage girls and adolescent women are often assaulted by someone they know.

- 13.3% of college women indicated that they had been forced to have sex in a dating situation. (Johnson, I., Sigler, R., "Forced Sexual Intercourse Among Intimates," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 15(1). 2000.)
- In a study of college women, more than 70% of rape or sexual assault victims knew their attackers, compared to about half of all violent crime victims. (Fisher, Bonnie S.; Cullen, Francis T.; and Turner, Michael G. *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. December 2000.)

Many teens and adolescent women do not identify forcible sex as sexual assault.

- Almost half (48.8%) of college-aged women who were victims of attacks that met the study's definition of rape did not consider what happened to them a sexual assault. (Fisher, Bonnie S.; Cullen, Francis T.; and Turner, Michael G. *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. December 2000.)
- In one study over 50% of high school boys and 42% of high school girls believe that there are times when it is "acceptable for a male to hold a female down and physically force her to engage in intercourse." (Warshaw, R. (1994). *I Never Called it Rape*. New York: Harper Perennial.)

The violence that teenage girls and adolescent women experience is strongly associated with such health problems as substance abuse, unhealthy weight control, risky sexual behavior, pregnancy and attempts to commit suicide.

- 18% of adolescent female sexual abuse or sexual assault survivors binge and purge more than once a week compared to 6% of non-survivors. (*The Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls*. The Commonwealth Fund. New York. 1997.)
- In one study, 30% of female adolescent sexual abuse or rape survivors used illegal drugs in the past month compared to 13% of non-survivors and 22% of female teen survivors drink at least once a month or once a week compared to 12% of non-survivors. (*The Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls*. The Commonwealth Fund. New York. 1997.)

Sexual harassment in schools and colleges is widespread.

- Four in 5 students (81%) say they have experienced some form of sexual harassment during their school lives: 85% of girls and 76% of boys. (*Hostile Hallways: The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools*. The American Association of University Women Education Foundation. Washington DC. 1993.)
- In a study of college women, 6% of female students had been shown pornographic pictures, almost 5% had someone expose their sexual organs to them, and 2.4% were observed naked without their consent. About half the respondents were subjected to sexist remarks and to catcalls and whistles with sexual overtones. One of 5 female students received an obscene telephone call and was asked intrusive questions about her sex life. One in 10 students had false rumors spread about her sex life. (Fisher, Bonnie S.; Cullen, Francis T.; and Turner, Michael G. *The Sexual Victimization of College Women*. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. December 2000.)

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