Sexual Assault in Intimate Relationships
Information Sheet

Sexual assault in an intimate relationship remains a “hidden crime” with many survivors not identifying forced or coerced sex as sexual assault. In 1993, marital rape became a crime in all 50 states, in at least one section of the sexual offense codes. 1

Prevalence

- 7.7% of U.S. women reported that they had been raped by an intimate partner in their lifetime. 2
- 76% of the women who were raped and/or physically assaulted since age 18 were assaulted by a current or former husband, cohabiting partner, or date. 3
- 45.9% of the battered women who reported abuse also reported being forced into sex by their intimate partners. 4
- In one study, over half of marital rape survivors surveyed experienced more than one sexual assault in a 6-month reference period before the survey. 5
- Approximately half (51.2%) of the women raped by an intimate partner said they were victimized multiple times by that same partner. Overall, female rape victims averaged 4.5 rapes by the same partner. 2
- Although sexual assault is perhaps the most understudied topic of same-sex violence, clinical work and advocacy efforts show that lesbians and gay men endure the same types of abuse that heterosexual women suffer, including sexual assault. 6

Effects

- Compared to other sexual assault victims, marital rape victims are more likely to be injured or seriously assaulted, but less likely to seek medical help. 5
- Women who were raped since age 18 were nearly twice as likely as their male counterparts to report an injury other than the rape itself. 3
- Research indicates that women who are raped by their husbands are just as likely to experience a variety of psychological reactions as women who are raped by strangers or acquaintances. 7


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