



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, cohabitating 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

¹Bergen, R. Marital Rape. VAWnet. www.vawnet.org. 1999.

²Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice. July 2000.

³Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. November 1998.

⁴Campbell, J. and Soeken, K. (1999). Forced Sex and Intimate Partner Violence: Effects on Women's Risk and Women's Health. *Violence Against Women*, 5, 1017-1035.

⁵Mahoney, P. (1999). High Rape Chronicity and Low Rates of Help-Seeking Among Wife Rape Survivors in a Nonclinical Sample. *Violence Against Women*, 5, 993-1016.

⁶Elliott, P. Shattering Illusions: Same-Sex Domestic Violence. In C. Renzetti & C. Miley (Eds.) *Violence in Gay and Lesbian Domestic Partnerships*. New York: The Haworth Press, Inc. 1996.

⁷Monson, C., Byrd, G. & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J. To Have and to Hold: Perceptions of Marital Rape. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 11, 410-424. 1996.