



CDC's website is being modified to comply with President Trump's Executive Orders.

About Sexual Violence

KEY POINTS

- Sexual violence is a significant problem in the United States.
- Sexual violence has a profound impact on lifelong health, opportunity, and well-being.

What is sexual violence?

Sexual violence is sexual activity when consent is not obtained or freely given. It impacts every community and affects both sexes and people of all sexual orientations and ages. Anyone can experience or perpetrate sexual violence.

The perpetrator of sexual violence is usually someone the survivor knows. This can include a friend, current or former intimate partner, coworker, neighbor, or family member. Sexual violence can occur in person, online, or through technology. This includes posting or sharing sexual pictures of someone without their consent, or non-consensual sexting.

Did you know?

Child sexual abuse is a form of sexual violence. Read more information about [child sexual abuse](#).



[What is sexual violence?](#)

Quick facts and stats

Researchers know the numbers underestimate this problem because many cases are unreported. Survivors may be ashamed, embarrassed, or afraid to tell the police, friends, or family about the violence. Victims may also keep quiet because they have been threatened or do not think anyone will help them.

Sexual violence is common:

- Over half of women and almost one in three men have experienced sexual violence involving physical contact during their lifetimes. [\[1\]](#)
- One in four women and about one in 26 men have experienced completed or attempted rape. [\[1\]](#)
- About one in nine men were made to penetrate someone during his lifetime. [\[1\]](#)
- One in three women and about one in nine men experienced sexual harassment in a public place. [\[1\]](#)

Sexual violence starts early:

- More than four in five female rape survivors reported that they were first raped before age 25 and almost half were first raped as a minor (i.e., before age 18). [\[1\]](#)

- Nearly eight in 10 male rape survivors reported they were made to penetrate someone before age 25 and about four in 10 were first made to penetrate as a minor. [\[1\]](#)

Some groups are affected more than others. Women and racial and ethnic minority groups experience a higher burden of sexual violence. [\[1\]](#) [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#) [\[5\]](#) For example, more than two in five non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native and non-Hispanic multiracial women were raped in their lifetime. [\[1\]](#)

Sexual violence is also costly. Recent estimates put the lifetime cost of rape at \$122,461 per survivor, including medical care, lost productivity from work, and criminal justice costs. [\[6\]](#)

Outcomes

Some consequences are physical, like bruising and genital injuries, sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancy (for women). Some consequences are psychological, such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. [\[7\]](#)

The consequences may be chronic. Survivors may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and experience recurring reproductive, gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, and sexual health problems. [\[7\]](#)

Sexual violence is also linked to negative health behaviors. Sexual violence survivors are more likely to smoke, abuse alcohol, use drugs, and engage in risky sexual activity. [\[8\]](#)

The trauma from sexual violence may impact a survivor's employment. This refers to time off from work, diminished performance, job loss, or inability to work. These issues disrupt earning power and have a long-term effect on the economic well-being of survivors and their families. Coping and completing everyday tasks after victimization can be challenging. Survivors may have difficulty maintaining personal relationships, returning to work or school, and regaining a sense of normalcy. [\[7\]](#)

Sexual violence is also connected to other forms of violence. For example, girls who have been sexually abused are more likely to experience additional sexual violence. They are also more likely to become victims of intimate partner violence in adulthood. Bullying perpetration in early middle school is linked to sexual harassment perpetration in high school. [\[9\]](#)

Prevention

Sexual violence can be prevented. [Certain factors may increase or decrease the risk](#) of perpetrating or experiencing sexual violence.

[Preventing sexual violence](#) requires understanding and addressing the factors that put people at risk for or protect them from violence. We must also understand how historical trauma and structural inequalities impact health. [\[1\]](#)

Changing social norms, teaching skills, empowering girls and women, and creating protective environments can help prevent and reduce sexual violence. We all have a role to play in prevention.

Need help? Know someone who does?

[Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network's \(RAINN\) National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) [↗](#)

Call **800.656.HOPE (4673)** to be connected with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area.



SOURCES

CONTENT SOURCE:

[National Center for Injury Prevention and Control](#)

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