

Sexual Assault in the United States

Prevalence

- The *National Intimate Partner & Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2017 Report on Sexual Violence* summarizes the lifetime and 12-month prevalence of five forms of sexual violence victimization of women and men in the U.S.¹
 - Definitions:²
 - **Contact Sexual Violence** means completed or attempted rape, males who are made to penetrate someone, sexual coercion, and unwanted sexual contact.
 - **Rape** is any unwanted completed or attempted vaginal, oral, or anal penetration through the use of physical force, threats to physically harm someone, or when the victim was unable to give consent or refuse.
 - **Being made to penetrate** includes when a victim was made to, or an attempt was made to make them, sexually penetrate someone without the victim's consent because the victim was physically forced, threatened with physical harm, or the victim was unable to give consent or refuse.
 - **Sexual Coercion** means any unwanted sexual penetration that happens after a person is pressured in a nonphysical way.
 - For example, feeling sexually pressured after being repeatedly asked for sex, feeling sexually pressured after someone threatens to end a relationship or spread rumors, or feeling sexually pressured due to someone's influence or authority.
 - **Unwanted Sexual Contact** means any unwanted sexual experience that involves touch but not sexual penetration.
 - For example, being kissed in a sexual way or having sexual body parts fondled, groped, or grabbed without consent.
 - In this report, female and male victims reported that acquaintances, intimate partners, family members, strangers, and people of authority committed contact sexual violence against them, across their lifetime.³
 - **Contact Sexual Violence Committed by an Acquaintance:**⁴
 - An acquaintance raped **56.1%** of female victims and **57.3%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.

¹ Basile, K. C., Smith, S. G., Kresnow, M., Khawwaja, S., & Leemis, R. W. (2022). "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2016/2-17 Report on Sexual Violence." CDC, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. Retrieved November 26, 2025, from <https://www.cdc.gov/nisvs/documentation/nisvsReportonSexualViolence.pdf>

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

- An acquaintance made **62.2%** of male victims penetrate someone in the victim's lifetime.
- An acquaintance sexually coerced **41.8%** of female victims and **49.1%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
- An acquaintance committed unwanted sexual contact against **59.9%** of female victims and **62.4%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
- **Contact Sexual Violence Committed by an Intimate Partner:⁵**
 - An intimate partner raped **39.3%** of female victims and **12.5%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
 - An intimate partner made **26.3%** of male victims penetrate someone in the victim's lifetime.
 - An intimate partner sexually coerced **58.3%** of female victims and **45.8%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
 - An intimate partner committed unwanted sexual contact against **16.8%** of female victims and **9.2%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
- **Contact Sexual Violence Committed by a Family Member:⁶**
 - A family member raped **16%** of female victims and **16%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
 - A family member made **5.9%** of male victims penetrate someone in the victim's lifetime.
 - A family member sexually coerced **9.1%** of female victims and **5.3%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
 - A family member committed unwanted sexual contact against **22.9%** of female victims and **8.3%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
- **Contact Sexual Violence Committed by a Stranger:⁷**
 - A stranger raped **12.1%** of female victims and **13.7%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
 - A stranger made **10.4%** of male victims penetrate someone in the victim's lifetime.
 - A stranger sexually coerced **4.7%** of female victims and **4.2%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
 - A stranger committed unwanted sexual contact against **22.4%** of female victims and **21.9%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

- **Contact Sexual Violence Committed by a Person of Authority:**⁸
 - A person in a position of authority raped **4%** of female victims and **9.2%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
 - A person in a position of authority made **5.9%** of male victims penetrate someone in the victim's lifetime.
 - A person in a position of authority sexually coerced **10.1%** of female victims and **10%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
 - A person in a position of authority committed unwanted sexual contact against **9.4%** of female victims and **7.2%** of male victims in the victim's lifetime.
- In this report, male and female victims reported completed or attempted rape, being made to penetrate someone, and sexual coercion for the first time, at different ages in their lifetime.⁹
 - **Experiencing Completed or Attempted Rape (by Age):**¹⁰
 - About **49%** of female victims and **56.6%** of male victims were aged 17 years and younger at the time of their first completed or attempted rape.
 - About **83.4%** of female victims and **86.1%** of male victims were aged 24 years and younger at the time of their first completed or attempted rape.
 - About **15.1%** of female victims and **12.2%** of male victims were aged 25 years and older at the time of their first completed or attempted rape.
 - **Being Made to Penetrate (by Age):**¹¹
 - About **79.9%** of male victims were aged 24 and younger when they were first made to penetrate someone.
 - About **41.1%** of male victims were aged 17 and younger when they were first made to penetrate someone.
 - About **18.8%** of male victims were aged 25 and older when they were first made to penetrate someone.
 - **Experiencing Sexual Coercion (by Age):**¹²
 - About **38.4%** of female victims and **30.1%** of male victims were aged 17 and younger when they first experienced sexual coercion.
 - About **73.5%** of female victims and **61.3%** of male victims were aged 24 and younger when they first experienced sexual coercion.
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⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

- About **24.5%** of female victims and **35.5%** of male victims were aged 25 and older when they first experienced sexual coercion.
- **Of the victims who were raped or sexually coerced:**¹³
 - **15.9%** of female victims who were raped and **19.2%** of female victims who were sexually coerced were impacted by sexually transmitted infections.
 - **18.2%** of male victims who were raped and made to penetrate were impacted by sexually transmitted infections.
 - **14.9%** of female victims who were raped and **16.6%** of female victims who were sexually coerced became pregnant.
 - **37%** of female victims who were raped and **25.7%** of male victims who were raped and made to penetrate experienced injury due to the sexual violence, including bruising, vaginal or anal tears, or other internal or external injuries.
 - **67.2%** of female victims and **49.5%** of male victims who were raped became concerned for their safety.
- According to one study on the prevalence of child sexual abuse and assault, across the U.S. which surveyed 13,052 children and adolescents, ages 0-17 years old, across three different years (2008, 2011, and 2014):¹⁴
 - The likelihood of sexual abuse increased by age.
 - There were higher reports of sexual abuse and assault committed inside or near children’s houses than at in school or at an after-school daycare setting.
 - The age of earliest victimization was the highest among adolescents, ages 14-17 years.
 - In **15%** of all cases in this sample, penetration was a part of the reported child sexual abuse.
 - Of all the child sexual abuse and assault cases in this study, other juveniles, including romantic partners and juvenile acquaintances, committed **76.7%** of the cases against males and **70.1%** of the cases against females.
 - Impact of the child sexual abuse and assault committed against the children and adolescents, in this sample: A total of **9.7%** of survivors missed school because of the abuse,
 - **9.7%** of survivors were injured because of the abuse,
 - **11.5%** received medical treatment because of the abuse
 - **66.3%** of the children and adolescents, aged 10-17 years, did not disclose the abuse to a parent or any other adult.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Gewirtz-Meydan, A. & Finkelhor, D. (2019). "Sexual Abuse and Assault in a Large National Sample of Children and Adolescents." Journal of Child Maltreatment. Retrieved December 02, 2025, from <https://www.unh.edu/ccrc/sites/default/files/media/2022-03/sexual-abuse-and-assault-in-a-large-national-sample-of-children-and-adolescents.pdf>

- **19.1%** of all children and adolescents, aged 0-17 years, reported the abuse to law enforcement.
- **21.8%** of all children and adolescents, aged 0-17 years, reported the abuse to a teacher.
- According to one study on child sexual abuse in the U.S., **14.1%** of adults reported a history of experiencing child sexual abuse in childhood.¹⁵
 - Of that total, **54%** reported child sexual abuse by an adult caregiver and **60.3%** reported child sexual abuse by a non-caregiver.¹⁶

Costs of Sexual Assault Across the Lifetime

- According to one study, rape results in more than **\$122,000** in costs per victim, and nearly **\$3.1 trillion** to the economy over the lifetimes of all 25 million victims in the U.S. population.¹⁷
- According to a study on the costs associated with nonfatal child sexual abuse cases, in 2015 U.S. Dollars, child sexual abuse survivors lost the following monetarily:
 - A total of **\$580 million** in childhood healthcare costs,
 - **\$399 million** in adulthood medical costs,
 - **6.8 billion** in productivity losses (among female survivors only),
 - **\$337 million** in child welfare costs,
 - **\$98 million** in crime-related costs,
 - **\$152 million** in special education costs,
 - **\$980 million** in suicide death costs, and
 - **\$1.6 billion** in losses for child sexual abuse survivors' quality of life.¹⁸
 - In this study, researchers estimated an additional cost for the loss of quality life for female child sexual abuse survivors, on average, which included **\$41,001** in 2015 U.S. Dollars.¹⁹
- According to another study on the cost of child sexual abuse in a nationally representative U.S. sample, findings show that child sexual abuse leads to the following losses:
 - **36-41% greater** likelihood of high school drop-out,
 - **17-24% lower** likelihood of achieving a bachelor's degree,
 - **6-8% lower** likelihood of being employed full-time, and
 - **13-19%** likelihood of obtaining lower earnings in young adulthood.²⁰

¹⁵ Henkhaus, L. E. (2022). "The Lasting Consequences of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Human Capital and Economic Well-Being." *Journal of Health Economics*. Retrieved December 02, 2025, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/hec.4557>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Center for Disease Control, "Lifetime Economic Burden of Rape among U.S. Adults," Peterson, Cora et al., 2017

¹⁸ Letourneau, E. J., Brown, D. S., Fang, Z., Hassan, A. & Mercy, J. A. (2018). "The Economic Burden of Child Sexual Abuse in the United States." *Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect*. Retrieved December 02, 2025, from <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6542279/pdf/nihms-1028269.pdf>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Henkhaus, L. E. (2022). "The Lasting Consequences of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Human Capital and Economic Well-Being." *Journal of Health Economics*. Retrieved December 02, 2025, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/hec.4557>