

Sexual Violence Against Women

FACT SHEET

Introduction

Sexual violence can affect anyone, but women experience it at disproportionately high rates. This disparity is driven by gender inequality, unequal power dynamics, and social norms that justify violence against women. Sexual violence is about power and control, not sexual desire, and these underlying factors contribute to women's increased risk of victimization.

Not all women are at the same level of risk. A woman's experiences are shaped by several parts of her identity, such as her race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or age. Women with multiple marginalized identities face overlapping forms of discrimination, which can increase their risk of sexual violence and make it more difficult to report abuse or access services. Understanding intersecting identities helps organizations provide equitable, survivor-centered care and prevent sexual violence.

National Overview

- More than **1 in 5** women in the U.S. have experienced completed or attempted rape during their lifetime.¹
- About **1 in 4** females in the U.S. experience child sexual abuse before age 18.²
- Nearly **half** of female survivors were first raped before age 18, and more than **4 in 5** were first raped before age 25.³
- Women who experienced child sexual abuse are **2 to 13 times** more likely to experience sexual violence again later in life than women who did not experience child sexual abuse.⁴

Maryland Statistics⁵

- **24%** of Maryland women have experienced completed or attempted rape in their lifetime.
- **28.8%** of Maryland women have been sexually coerced in their lifetime.
- **57.2%** of Maryland women have experienced contact sexual violence in their lifetime.
- **52.4%** of Maryland women have experienced unwanted sexual contact in their lifetime.

Women at Increased Risk

- **Adolescent girls:** Nearly **1 in 4** adolescent girls will experience physical or sexual violence by the time they are 20.⁶
- **Young women ages 18–24:** Women ages 18–24 experience the highest rates of rape and sexual assault compared with women in other age groups.⁷
- **Women with disabilities:** About **2 in 5** female survivors have a disability at the time of rape.⁸
- **Native American and Alaska Native women:** More than **4 in 5** Native American and Alaska Native women have experienced violence in their lifetime, and **56.1%** have experienced sexual violence.⁹
- **LGBTQ+ women:** Lesbian, bisexual, and other sexual minority women experience higher rates of sexual violence than heterosexual women, with bisexual women experiencing the highest prevalence.¹⁰
- **Incarcerated women:** About **86%** of women in jail have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives.¹¹

For survivor resources, please visit:

mcasa.org/survivors/culturally-responsive-services

¹ "About Sexual Violence" (2025). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://www.cdc.gov/sexual-violence/about/index.html>.

² "About Child Sexual Abuse" (2024). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://www.cdc.gov/child-abuse-neglect/about/about-child-sexual-abuse.html>.

³ "About Sexual Violence" (2025). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://www.cdc.gov/sexual-violence/about/index.html>.

⁴ "About Child Sexual Abuse" (2024). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://www.cdc.gov/child-abuse-neglect/about/about-child-sexual-abuse.html>.

⁵ Leemis, Ruth W. et al. "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2023/2024 Sexual Violence Data Brief" (2025). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://www.cdc.gov/nisvs/media/pdfs/sexual-violence-brief.pdf>.

⁶ LynnMarie Sardinha, LynnMarie, et al., "Intimate partner violence against adolescent girls: regional and national prevalence estimates and associated country-level factors" (2024). The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health. Retrieved September 2026 from [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642\(24\)00145-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(24)00145-7/fulltext).

⁷ Sinotich, Sophi and Langton, Lynn, "Rape and Sexual Assault Victimization Among College-Age Females, 1995–2013" (2014). Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/rsavcaf9513.pdf>.

⁸ "Sexual Violence and Intimate Partner Violence Among People with Disabilities" (2024). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://www.cdc.gov/sexual-violence/about/sexual-violence-and-intimate-partner-violence-among-people-with-disabilities.html>.

⁹ Rosay, André B., "Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings From the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey" (2016). U.S. Department of Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/violence-against-american-indian-and-alaska-native-women-and-men-2010-findings>.

¹⁰ Canan, Sasha N., "Differences in Lesbian, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Women's Experiences of Sexual Assault and Rape in a National U.S. Sample" (2019). Differences in Lesbian, Bisexual, and Heterosexual Women's Experiences of Sexual Assault and Rape in a National U.S. Sample.

¹¹ "86 percent of women in jail are sexual-violence survivors" (2017). National PREA Resource Center. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/resource/86-percent-women-jail-are-sexual-violence-survivors>.