

NISVS Initial Talking Points

National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC)
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On December 14, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the initial findings of the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS). The full 124-page report is available on the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/NISVS/index.html>. This large-scale ongoing study confirms many things we know about sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking and may help shed new light on the scope and context of these forms of violence.

The CDC has prepared an extensive toolkit that describes the survey methodology, best ways to interpret and use the data, tips for working with media, and answers to frequently-asked questions. Some key findings, particularly pertaining to sexual violence, are highlighted below. For additional resources please contact the NSVRC at www.nsvrc.org or by emailing resources@nsvrc.org. A brief summary comparing NISVS to previous national surveys is available at: National Research on Sexual Violence A Look to the Future <http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/national-research-sexual-violence>

- **Sexual violence is one of the most pervasive and serious public health issues in this country.** According to the newly released report, nearly 1 in 5 women have been raped at some point in their lives, including 1.3 million women being raped in the last 12 months. Over 50% of women who are raped in the U.S. are raped by a current or former partner. And nearly 1 in 2 women (44.6 %) and 1 in 5 men (22.2%) have experienced sexual violence victimization other than rape in their lifetime. While the rate of males who reported being raped in their lifetime is surprisingly low in this study, one of the strengths of NISVS is the range of behaviors reported (*see next bullet point*).
- **Sexual violence includes a range of non-consensual behaviors** including rape, sexual coercion, unwanted sexual touch, and non-contact forms of abuse. “Non-contact unwanted sexual experiences are those unwanted experiences that do not involve any touching or penetration, including someone exposing their sexual body parts, flashing, or masturbating in front of the victim, someone making a victim show his or her body parts, someone making a victim look at or participate in sexual photos or movies, or someone harassing the victim in a public place in a way that made the victim feel unsafe.”
- **The impact of sexual violence is far-reaching.** Although no group is free from violence, consistent patterns have emerged showing that **women, young**

people, and racial and ethnic minorities are the most heavily affected subpopulations in the United States. Many first experiences with sexual violence occur in childhood and continue into early adulthood. Oppression and a number of social factors such as poverty and disadvantage, sexism and other forms of discrimination, social exclusion and attitudes about violence contribute to risk for perpetration and victimization.

- **Services for victims of sexual assault are essential.** We know from other research (such as the Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACE, Study, www.acestudy.org) that child sexual abuse and other traumatic events can result in serious long-term physical and mental health problems. And NISVS confirms what previous studies have also shown – that women who were sexually abused as minors are at significantly increased risk of being raped again as adults.
- **This study reinforces the fact that most perpetrators of sexual violence abuse people that they know, often using their positions of trust and authority in order to do so.** NISVS examined the following categories of possible relationships between perpetrator and victim: family members, persons of authority, current or former intimate partner, acquaintance, or stranger. While the first four categories -- non-stranger relationships-- are the most prevalent, they are also often the least reported.
- **Sexual violence can be prevented.** Since NISVS will be an annual survey, we will be able to track trends over time as prevention programs are implemented. NISVS shows that it is critical that we prevent sexual violence before it occurs the first time. More than three-quarters of female victims were raped before their 25th birthday; and more than one-quarter of male victims of completed rape were first raped when they were 10 years old or younger. It is critical that we continue strengthening sexual violence prevention efforts through the Rape Prevention Education (RPE) program and other sexual assault specific programs through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) such as Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP). Read more about public policy tools for prevention at: <http://www.naesv.org>

What about state level data?

In the current report, most states have some key estimates for sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence victimization. Some states might require a few more years of data collection in order to ensure the estimates are reliable to report. Advocates and media are encouraged to avoid comparing data from various states, given the different demographic and economic compositions of states and also realizing that people move throughout their lifetime so the incidents reported may or may not have occurred in the state in which the participant was living at the time of the interview.

View the full report and toolkit at www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention and additional supporting resources at www.nsvrc.org and www.nrcdv.org.