

SAAM 2009

Facts and Figures

Statistics

While statistics provide good information, particularly from the media's standpoint, it is important to use them carefully. People can interpret the same statistic differently — one to support his or her own agenda, another to prove an opposing agenda. When using statistics and figures, try to use the simplest data available in a straightforward way. Make sure that you interpret the figures accurately and obtain them from reliable sources that you can cite if asked. When using several statistics, check that your information is consistent with the message you convey.

Obtaining Local Figures

In order to localize the issues during Sexual Assault Awareness Month, it is a good idea to incorporate local information and statistics about the impact of sexual violence on your community. Your city or county's law enforcement agency is one resource for obtaining local figures. You can also check with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reporting Program online at <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm>. The California Department of Justice Criminal Justice Statistics Center is another resource for crime statistics broken down by county. You can reach them online at <http://ag.ca.gov/crime.php>.

When using crime reporting data, which is often the only source of local crime information, it is important to remember to use them in their proper context. It is important to understand that statistics drawn from crime reports are *always* an underestimate of the true amount of sexual violence that occurs in any community. The National Institute of Justice estimates that approximately 31% of attempted and completed rapes are reported to the police (based on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey). Other studies have suggested much lower reporting rates, to as low as 5% among female college students.

CALCASA has once again made available for use the *CALCASA Report on Research on Rape and Violence*. This publication is an annual compendium of research on issues related to rape, sexual assault and other forms of community violence. The Report is available on our website at

<http://www.calcasa.org/256.0.html>.