

Fact Sheet

For sexual violence victims, safe and affordable housing is often even further out of reach, due to the effects of trauma, economic insecurity, and lack of resources in the aftermath of sexual violence. The majority of sexual assaults take place in or near victims' homes or the homes of victims' friends, relatives, or neighbors (Mindlin & Vickers, 2007).

Impact of housing costs

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, a household should pay no more than 30% of their income on housing (called the Fair Market Rent or FMR). More than half (18.5 million) of America's renters do not earn enough to afford the average FMR in their state (Pelletiere, Wardrip, & Crowley, 2008). The minimum wage does not translate to a realistic housing wage, leaving millions of people in unstable and/or substandard housing conditions in this country. Homeless shelters are full in many localities throughout the nation with predictions of bed shortages in the future.

Housing and oppression

As with many social and economic issues, barriers to obtaining safe and affordable housing are magnified for traditionally oppressed groups affected by racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, classism, ethnocentrism, and adultism. The

research findings that follow help to illuminate these connections between sexual violence, housing and oppression.

- Sixty-one percent of homeless girls and 19% of homeless boys report sexual abuse as the reason for leaving home (Estes & Weiner, 2001).
- The amount of homeless LGBTIQ homeless youth in the U.S. ranges from 35% to 50% of all homeless youth (Ray, 2006).
- According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (2010) Resident Characteristics Report, 34% of residents living in public housing have a disability.
- In a study of rural women who had been sexually assaulted, the women indicated that without housing, other services to address the violence were not likely to be helpful (Logan, 2005).
- In a national study of sexual assault advocates, 58% of respondents reported incidents of tenants being sexually assaulted by landlords (Keeley, 2006).



- According to the National Runaway Switchboard, “LGBT homeless youth are seven times more likely than their heterosexual peers to be victims of a crime” (Ray, 2006, p.3).
- According to a study of homeless and marginally housed people, 32% of women, 27% of men, and 38% of transgendered persons reported either physical or sexual victimization in the previous year (Kushel et al., 2003).
- In a sample of racially diverse homeless mothers, 92% reported that they had experienced severe physical or sexual violence during their lives; 43% reported child sexual abuse in childhood (Goodman, Fels & Glenn, 2006).

What advocates can do

Safe, affordable, and stable housing can be a protective factor against both sexual violence perpetration and victimization. Research on sex offender treatment and management finds that stable housing, supportive resources, and employment are critical to preventing recidivism. Research also shows that victims often lose their housing due to sexual violence and that a lack of housing options can put them at greater risk for further victimization.

For more information about how advocates and allied partners can address housing as both an interventive and preventive resource, please contact the National Sexual Violence Resource Center at resources@nsvrc.org or 1-877-739-3895.

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