

## Intimate Partner Sexual Abuse

Intimate partner sexual abuse is any form of sexual violence that takes place within a current or former intimate relationship. It often occurs alongside other forms of abuse or it may occur as the sole form of abuse in the relationship. Abusive partners who are physically abusive, are often also sexually abusive.

Intimate partner sexual abuse includes but is not limited to:

- using force, threats, or coercion to obtain sex or sexual acts
- unwanted vaginal, oral, and/or anal intercourse
- forced to view or to participate in pornography
- sexual degradation and humiliation
- shaming the victim's sexuality or sexual preferences
- interference with birth control use and safe sex practices
- not respecting the victim's sexual privacy.

Intimate partner violence of all kinds, and sexual abuse in particular, is underreported - one study estimates that only 16% of all sexual assaults are reported. The harm of violence from an acquaintance or intimate partner is exacerbated if sexual abuse has also occurred; victims who have experienced both forms of abuse report higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, major depression, and substance abuse. Intimate partner sexual abuse is also statistically associated with more severe and frequent emotional and physical violence, threats, stalking, unwanted pregnancy, abuse during pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection, and risks to children. Additionally, intimate partner sexual abuse has consistently been identified as an indicator of increased risk of domestic violence homicide.<sup>1</sup>

## Prevalence

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control launched the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey in 2010. Findings for intimate partner sexual abuse include<sup>2</sup>:

- Nearly 1 in 10 women in the United States (9.4% or approximately 11.1 million) has been raped by an intimate partner in her lifetime.

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<sup>1</sup> Campbell, J.C., Kub, J., Belknap, R., & Templin, T.N. (1997). Predictors of depression in battered women. *Violence Against Women*, 3(3),271-293; see also McCloskey, L.A., Treviso, M. Scionti, T., & dal Pozzo, G. (2002). A comparative study of battered women and their children in Italy and the United States. *Journal of Family Violence*, 17(1), 53-74.

<sup>2</sup> Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- More than half (51.1%) of female victims of rape and three quarters of female victims of sexual coercion in the United States reported that the perpetrator was a current or former partner.
- Too few men reported rape by an intimate partner to produce reliable prevalence estimates.
- Approximately 1 in 12 men in the United States (8.0% or approximately 9 million) has experienced sexual violence other than rape by an intimate partner in his lifetime. This includes being made to penetrate an intimate partner (2.2%), sexual coercion (4.2%), unwanted sexual contact (2.6%), and non-contact unwanted sexual experiences (2.7%).

## Addressing Sexual Abuse with Survivors

- Ensure that all staff receive training on the health and safety consequences of intimate partner sexual abuse and on assessing all survivors for sexual assault;
- Understand that sexual abuse is often the last type of abuse a survivor may disclose, even though it may have been the most traumatic;
- When discussing types of abuse with survivors, always include information about sexual abuse, and how common it is among domestic violence survivors;
- As an indicator of increased risk of domestic violence homicide, include sexual abuse when safety planning with survivors;
- Be informed about the process of a sexual assault medical examination so that you can explain to your client what to expect; and
- Have information on local sexual assault examiner programs and rape crisis services ready and available for your clients.

## Resources

- NYS Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline 1-800-942-6906
- Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) [www.rainn.org/](http://www.rainn.org/)
- NYS Department of Health <http://www.health.ny.gov/nysdoh/safe/>
- NYS Coalition Against Sexual Assault [www.nyscasa.org](http://www.nyscasa.org)
- The New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault <http://www.svfreenyc.org/>
- The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence <https://www.endsexualviolence.org/>
- National Sexual Assault Resource Center [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)

**1-800-942-6906**

NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline

CONFIDENTIAL 24 HRS/7 DAYS

English & español, multi-language accessibility

711: Deaf or Hard of Hearing

In NYC: 311 or 1-800-621-HOPE (4673)

TDD: 1-800-810-7444