

Violence Against American Indian Women

Fact Sheet

“Native women are the most battered, raped, stalked and murdered group of women in the United States”

United States Department of Justice Statistics

- Native American women are raped at a rate more than double that of rapes reported by all races on an annual average. (All races: 2 per 1,000, Native Americans: 7 per 1,000)
- The rate of violent crime experienced by Native American women is nearly 50% higher than that reported by black males aged 12 and over.
- Violent crime rate among Native American women was 98 per 1,000 - more than twice that of whites (40 per 1,000) or blacks 56 per 1,000)
- At least 70% of violence experienced by Native Americans are committed by persons not of the same race.... Substantially higher than for whites or blacks.
- American Indian women were victimized by an intimate at rates higher than those for all other females (whites at 8.1 per 1,000; Indians at 23.2 per 1,000)

A health problem of enormous proportions

Intimate Partner Violence is a health problem of enormous proportions. It is estimated that between 20 and 30% of women and 7.5% of men in the United States have been physically and/or sexually abused by an intimate partner at some point in their adult lives.^{1,2,3} Heterosexual women are five to eight times more likely than heterosexual men to be victimized by an intimate partner.⁴

- Studies conducted in Indian Country indicate lifetime incidences to be much higher for Native American women. A 1998 study by the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse found a lifetime incidence of intimate partner violence to be 91% and a 12-month incidence at 31% in one Southwestern Native American Tribal community.⁵
- Similarly another 1998 study, of 169 women on the San Carlos Apache reservation, found 75 % of women to report sustaining a physical assault in their current relationship.⁶
- In addition the U.S. Department of Justice *1993-1998 Study of Violent Victimization and Race* found Native American women to be victims of violent encounters at the hands of intimate partners more frequently than any other race in the U.S. It goes further to identify that offenders are often not of the same race.⁷

Victimized at higher rates

According to United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs⁸, American Indian women were victimized by an intimate at rates higher than those for all other females.

- From 1988-1991, homicide was the 3rd leading cause of death for Native women. Of Native women murdered, 75% were killed by a family member, an acquaintance, or someone they knew.⁹



- The stalking rate is so high against Native/Alaskan Native women that 17% will be stalked during their lifetimes.¹⁰

Disproportionate numbers of rape victims

While the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS) found no statistically significant difference among non-Hispanic white women, African-American women, or mixed-race women, it did find disproportionate numbers of rape victims in the American Indian/Native American community (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006).

- The NVAWS found that 34% of American Indian women reported experiencing an attempted or completed rape in their lifetime, compared with 18.8% of African American women, 17.7% of white women, and 6.8% of Asian American women (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006).
- Population specific research suggests that American Indians are reticent to report their victimization (Wahab & Olson, 2004). Estimates of underreporting suggest 70% of sexual assaults of American Indians go unreported (Wahab & Olson, 2004). Reasons include fear of white agencies' racism, fear of being ostracized by family and friends, guilt, shame, and not knowing in which jurisdiction to report the crime (Wahab & Olson, 2004).

¹ Menutt LA, Carlson BE, Persaud M, et al. Cumulative Abuse Experienced, physical health and health behaviors. *Annals of Epidemiology*. 2002; 12: 123-130.

² Hathaway JE, Mucci LA, Silverman, et al. Health Status and Healthcare use of Massachusetts women reporting partner abuse, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2000; 19: 302-307.

³ Liebschutz, JM, Frayne SM, Saxe GN. *Violence Against Women: Physician's Guide to Identification and Management*. Philadelphia, PA: American College of Physicians; 2003: 211-221.

⁴ Beauvais, F. Spotlight on Special Populations; American Indians and Alcohol. *Alcohol Health and Research World*. 1998; 22; 1253-259

⁵ Robin WR., Chester B., Rasmussen, JK. Intimate Violence in a Southwestern American Indian Tribal Community. *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health*; 4, 335-344

⁶ Skupien M. 1998 Domestic Violence on the San Carlos Apache Reservation: Incidence and Prevalence Associated Depression and Post Traumatic Stress Symptomatology and Cultural Considerations. *Thesis*. The John Hopkins University, 259

⁷ Rennison C. Violent Victimization and Race, 1993-98, *Bureau of Justice Statistics; Special Report*. March 2001

⁸ Bureau of Justice Statistics; *Violent Victimization and Race, 1993-98 Report*, (whites at 8.1 per 1,000; Indians at 23.2 per 1,000).

⁹ Homicide and Suicide among Native Americans, 1979-92.

¹⁰ Stalking in America : Findings from National Violence Against Women Survey; NIJ & CDC 1998.

