



FREEDOM FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

# Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault

## Fact Sheet

### What are the facts about sexual assault and intimate partner violence?

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- A National Institute of Justice study on women who had been physically assaulted by an intimate partner found that 68% of the women had also been sexually assaulted by that partner. The same study showed that sexual assaults are less likely to be reported than physical assaults. Victims are more likely to be embarrassed, fear reprisal, and more likely to think the police would not respond.
- The same study reported 14% to 25% of women report sexual assault by their intimate partner at some time.<sup>1</sup>
- 26% of girls in grades 9-12 report experiencing physical abuse, sexual abuse, or date-forced sex.<sup>2</sup>

### How are intimate partner violence and sexual assault linked?

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Intimate partner violence occurs when a person attempts to have power and control through violent means or by threatening violence.

It is often a cyclical pattern of coercive behavior. The abuse may be physical, emotional, or economic and can include stalking or other isolating behavior.

Rape and sexual assault are forms of intimate partner violence used by abusers as tools of humiliation and control.

**Sexual abuse** may include demanding or forcing sex acts that the partner finds painful or humiliating, insulting the partner sexually, using dangerous objects as "sex toys," having sex with the partner while s/he's sleeping, exposing the partner to sexually transmitted infections, or forbidding birth control.

### Who commits sexual assault and intimate partner violence?

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Abusers can be from any social, economic, ethnic, religious, cultural, and racial background.

It can be a partner, spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, or date.

The most common characteristic of perpetrators is that they are usually known and trusted by the victim.

### What are some feelings the victim may experience?

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There is no consistent or "correct" reaction to violence. S/he may feel shocked, helpless and powerless.

It is common to feel guilt and somehow responsible for the sexual violence.

Know that sexual abuse is never the victim's fault. S/he may feel anger, confusion, and shame.

It is very common to experience heightened fear and anxiety in general. Post traumatic stress disorder can also occur.

### Where can I learn more?

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National Sexual Violence Resource Center  
(p) 717.909.0710  
resources@nsvrc.org  
www.nsvrc.org

Rape, Abuse & Incest Nation Network  
(p) 1.800.656.HOPE  
info@rainn.org  
www.rainn.org/contact-us

### References

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1. (NIJ Journal No. 256, 1/07)
2. (Commonwealth Fund, 1997)

For more information, please contact:

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