

MALE SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS

Statistics

- In 2005, there were 191,670 violent sex crimes – 8% or 15, 130 were male victims. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Victimization, 2005, published September 2006.
- Of the 15,130 male victims, 100% of the offenders were strangers. Ibid.
- 71% of male victims were raped before age 18; 48% before the age of 12 and 23% between ages 12 and 17. Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000.
- About 5% of Texas men have been victims of sexual assault. A Focus on Sexual Assault Report, 8/2003, Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin.
- Results of several surveys indicate that 10% of all male prisoners in U.S. correctional systems have been raped, sexually assaulted or coerced by other inmates. Human Rights Watch, "Male Rape in US Prisons," 2001.

Overview of the Issue

- Violent sexual crime affects both heterosexual and gay men. Male rape victims who disclose often face unsympathetic attitudes from friends, family, formal support services and their community, who propagate the myth that 'real' men cannot be raped.
- If the perpetrator is male, a heterosexual victim may fear being perceived as gay. Some incidents of male sexual assault are forms of gay bashing, motivated by homophobia, and are accompanied by verbal harassment.
- If the perpetrator is female, the victim may fear being disbelieved or trivialized. In a case where a woman sexually assaults a boy, he (and society) is likely to see it as sexual initiation and deny it as abuse, even if he is traumatized. He may be confused because he experienced physical sexual arousal. However, arousal does not signal consent.
- Male rape occurs often in prisons but is frequently ignored and covered up. Further victimization results when released inmates suffer the effects of rape trauma and have the potential to spread sexually transmitted diseases.

What You Can Do

- Male victims need to be believed and reassured that it was not their fault or an issue of their sexuality.
- Friends and family can offer uncritical and unconditional support by encouraging a male victim to seek medical or other professional help and by supporting their decisions about reporting the assault.

Impact on Survivors

- Common characteristics for male victims are denial, shame, sexual and gender anxiety, chaotic relationships, compulsive behaviors involving sex, food, drugs or work, as well as symptoms of Rape Trauma Syndrome.
- The myth of male invulnerability to victimization can increase the sense of isolation and shame that a male victim feels. Some male survivors question and punish themselves by engaging in self-destructive behaviors like aggression or drug use. They may be more disturbed by the sexual aspect than the violent.

Quotable

Sexual assault can shatter a male victim's concept of masculinity. We must realize that being a man does not mean never being a victim. Rape is an act of power and control, not of sex. Seek help if you or a loved one is victimized.