

SEXUAL ASSAULT OFFENDERS / RAPISTS

Statistics

- Of the average annual 200,780 victims in 2004-2005, two-thirds were committed by someone who is known to the victim. 73% of sexual assaults were perpetrated by a non-stranger, 38% by a friend or acquaintance, 28% by an intimate and 7% by another relative. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Victimization, 2005, published September 2006. Note: Data for 2006 is not yet available.
- In 2001, about 11% of rapes involved the use of weapons—3% a gun, 6% a knife and 2% used another form of weapon. 84% of victims reported the use of physical force only and 5% were unsure. Bureau of Justice Statistics National Crime Victimization Study, 2003.
- Within three years of their release from prison in 1994, 5 percent of sex offenders were rearrested for sex crimes. Patrick A. Langan et al., "Recidivism of Sex Offenders Released from Prison in 1994" BJS, 2007.

Overview of the Issue

- There is no typical sexual offender. Most are men but some are women. They vary in age, ethnicity and educational level. They are diverse in motives, commitment and degree of violence. They range from voyeurs, exhibitionists, rapist, sexual sadists and sexually violent predators; however, all are dangerous.
- Most sex offenders begin in adolescence. They may have a history of developmental problems, exposure to violence and pornography and abuse. But childhood abuse does not predict sexual aggression. Factors such as age of onset, number of incidents and perceptions of family responses to abuse indicate why some sexually abused youth go on to abuse while most do not.
- Common sex offender behaviors are secrecy and deception; rationalization; thinking errors such as power play; selfishness and feelings of entitlement; manipulation; being personable; exploitation; always testing boundaries; and resistance to change. In order to manage their behavior, sex offenders must have external controls like supervision, registration, child safety zones, law enforcement, electronic monitoring and community notification. Internal controls, like identifying triggers and deviant thoughts, are usually not enough to prevent re-offending.

What You Can Do

- Stay informed. Learn how to access your local registered sex offender database (<http://www.records.txdps.state.tx.us>).
- Teach children safety measures and develop a family code for emergencies. Most victims know their offenders. Be active in your community and know your neighbors.
- If you are a sexual assault survivor, report it and have a sexual assault examination for evidence collection. Encourage others to report. It is hard, but it may take a sex offender off the street.

Impact on Victims

- Sexual assault is the most underreported violent crime, partly because of victims' fears of retaliation. Repeat offenders will not stop unless stopped. Psychological and/or chemical treatment is more effective in curbing deviant behavior than incarceration alone. Offenders in treatment are more likely to make restitution for their behavior. Such atonement may contribute to their victim's treatment process.
- Many survivors report that the attempt to put their assailant in jail gives them a feeling of empowerment and closure. Playing an active role, like writing down details of their attacker and the assault and testifying can give back to survivors the control they lost in the assault.

Quotable

Sex offenders are unpredictable; even they are uncertain of when and how their violence will escalate. All sexual offenders should be held responsible for their behavior. Criminal sanctions are needed to immediately protect the public, but treatment is essential to curb recidivism.

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