

addressing sexual violence within relationships



Sexual violence has lasting effects on individuals, families, and communities. When someone is assaulted or harassed, it can affect their ability to concentrate on schoolwork, their job, and their relationships. Sometimes a person experiences violence by a person they love or with whom they are romantically involved. This type of violence isolates that person from other people in their life and has dangerous consequences.

WHAT IS INTIMATE PARTNER SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) occurs when **an individual uses force, threats, manipulation, or coercion to control their partner and force them into unwanted sexual contact or activity.**

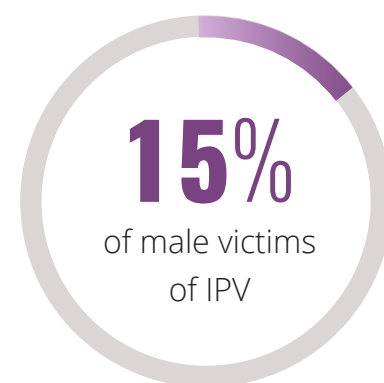
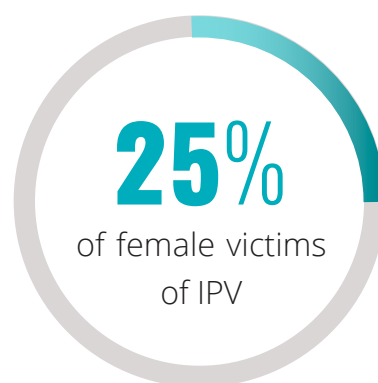
IPSV refers to a range of behaviors, including nonconsensual condom removal (sometimes called “stealthing”) or other birth control sabotage, forced unsafe sex practices, and/or controlling a partner’s decisions regarding pregnancy. IPSV can happen regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, geography, ability, appearance, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Adolescent relationship abuse

Adolescence is a time for exploring relationships. Unfortunately, many adolescents and teens experience coercion, abuse, or assault as part of their first or early relationships. 25 percent of female victims and 15 percent of male victims first experienced intimate partner violence prior to age 18.¹ CDC research found that nearly 1 in 10 teens

▶ intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) :

a range of sexually abusive behaviors, used to coerce or control a partner in a romantic relationship.



25 percent of female victims and 15 percent of male victims first experienced intimate partner violence prior to the age of 18.

(CDC, 2017).



reported perpetrating some type of sexual violence on a partner (including sexual coercion, unwanted kissing / touching, and completed rape).²

Adult experiences with IPSV

Healthy relationships are supportive, respectful, and bring out our best selves. However, some individuals use sexual abuse, coercion, and assault as ways to control and terrorize their partner. Over 18 percent of women and 8 percent of men reported experiencing contact sexual violence by an intimate partner.³

IPSV has some qualities that make it different from other forms of intimate partner violence and/or



sexual violence.⁴ These qualities may make it more challenging for a survivor to come forward or heal from the experiences.

Survivors of IPSV often experience:

- Long-lasting and/or repetitive trauma — the partner may repeatedly assault or abuse over the course of weeks, months, or years.
- Higher likelihood to be targeted for physical violence.
- Higher risk of sexually-transmitted infections (STIs)
- Higher risk of fatality.
- Higher risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, or anxiety.

ABUSE OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Sexual coercion and abuse within relationships is always harmful and can have a lasting negative impact. People who are harming their partner may exploit specific characteristics that are commonly shared and known in the relationship, such as:

- Sexual orientation
- Gender identity
- Immigration / citizenship status
- Different levels of ability

... among others.

Abusers may use specific information to coerce a partner into keeping silent.

Abusers may use this specific information to coerce a partner into keeping silent about abusive behaviors. While it can always often be difficult for survivors to seek help in an abusive relationship, these additional factors can add another layer of challenges for victims who want to seek help.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Smith, S.G., Chen, J., Basile, K.C., Gilbert, L.K., Merrick, M.T., Patel, N., Walling, M., & Jain, A. (2017). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 State Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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- ³ Smith et al. (2017)
- ⁴ McOrmond-Plummer, L. (Spring/Summer 2008). Considering the differences: Intimate partner sexual violence in sexual assault and domestic violence discourse. *Connections*, 4-7. Retrieved from https://rainn.org/pdf-files-and-other-documents/Public-Policy/Issues/CONNECTIONS_IPSV.pdf

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The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) is the statewide organization representing 21 county-based rape crisis centers and Rutgers University's Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance. NJCASA elevates the voice of survivors and service providers through advocacy, training, and support for efforts to create safer communities for all people.

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