

## Characterizing Sexual Violence Victimization in Youth: 2012 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey

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**Introduction:** Youth sexual violence victimization is an urgent public health concern that can lead to a variety of health problems and increased risk for victimization during adulthood. Examining the characteristics of early victimization and their association with subsequent victimization during adulthood may help strengthen primary prevention efforts.

**Methods:** Data are from the 2012 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey. Prevalence estimates were computed in 2017 for rape and made to sexually penetrate, their subtypes, as well as proportions among victims by type of perpetrator. Chi-square tests of association were conducted between youth sexual violence victimization and the same experiences in adulthood.

**Results:** Approximately 10 million U.S. females (8.4%) experienced completed or attempted rape and 1.9 million U.S. males (1.6%) were made to penetrate someone during youth. Most victims knew their perpetrators. Being raped or made to penetrate during youth was associated with increased likelihood of such victimization in adulthood.

**Conclusions:** Females and males experience youth sexual violence victimization at alarming rates. Primary prevention efforts with youth are critical to prevent early victimization, subsequent victimization in adulthood, and the mental and physical health consequences associated with sexual violence victimization.

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### INTRODUCTION

Youth sexual violence (SV) victimization represents an urgent public health concern, setting young people on trajectories for future mental/emotional, behavioral, and health problems, including physical injury, depression, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and other health consequences.<sup>1–3</sup> Early SV victimization also increases the likelihood of experiencing SV victimization during adulthood.<sup>4–6</sup> By utilizing nationally representative data from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS), youth SV victimization was characterized in the U.S., and associations between early SV victimization and subsequent adult victimization were examined. This report focuses on completed and attempted rape and made to penetrate experiences.

### METHODS

Data were from the 2012 NISVS, an ongoing, IRB-approved, nationally representative random-digit-dial telephone survey of the non-institutionalized English- and Spanish-speaking population aged ≥18 years across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. NISVS collected self-reported lifetime and past 12-month prevalence data on SV, intimate partner violence, and

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stalking victimization. A total of 11,940 adult respondents (6,625 females, 5,315 males) completed the survey in 2012. The weighted response rate was 33.2%; the weighted cooperation rate was 80.3%.

## Measures

NISVS captured multiple forms of SV victimization, including rape (completed forced, attempted forced, or alcohol/drug-facilitated penetration), being made to sexually penetrate a perpetrator (completed or attempted), and other forms of SV.<sup>7</sup>

Adult respondents were asked about victimization experienced in their lifetime and in the 12 months preceding the survey. For each perpetrator, respondents were asked their own age the first and last time a given perpetrator "... did this/any of these things..." to them and their relationship to that perpetrator the first/last time the violence occurred.

Respondents who reported first being raped or made to penetrate at age <18 years were classified as having been raped or made to penetrate during youth. The types of perpetrators were also assessed. Respondents who reported their age as ≥18 years the last time they were victimized were classified as adult SV victims.

## Statistical Analysis

In 2017, prevalence of youth SV victimization was calculated overall and by type of perpetrator. Chi-square tests of association were computed between female completed or attempted rape and male completed or attempted being made to penetrate experiences in youth and adulthood. Estimates based on ≤20 respondents and those with relative SEs >30% were considered statistically unreliable and not presented. Percentage estimates within subtype may not sum to 100% because of multiple types/variation in responding. All analyses were conducted using SAS-Callable SUDAAN, version 11.0, accounting for complex survey designs.

## RESULTS

In the U.S., an estimated 8.4% of females and 0.7% of males experienced completed or attempted rape during youth. Within subtypes, 5.7% of females and 0.4% of males experienced completed forced penetration. An estimated 3.5% of females experienced completed alcohol/drug-facilitated penetration, and 2.1% of females experienced attempted forced penetration (males' estimates for these subtypes were not statistically reliable; [Table 1](#)).

An estimated 1.6% of U.S. males were made to penetrate someone else (completed or attempted) during their youth. Within subtypes, 0.8% were made to penetrate someone else, and 1.1% were made to penetrate through alcohol/drug-facilitation. Neither male estimates for attempted made to penetrate nor female estimates for made to penetrate were statistically reliable ([Table 1](#)).

The majority of SV victims knew their perpetrators. Among female youth rape victims, 43.7% reported the perpetrator was an acquaintance, 28.8% reported a current/former intimate partner, and 27.7% reported a family member. Among female youth raped by an acquaintance, 21.6% reported being raped by a friend, 12.2% by a family friend, 13.9% by a friend of a friend, 11.5% by a neighbor, and 15.5% by a classmate. Among females raped by an intimate partner, 68.6% reported a boy/girlfriend and 15.7% reported a dating partner. Among females raped by a family member, 21.2% reported a parent, 12.8% reported a step-parent, 22.8%

**Table 1.** Prevalence of Rape and Made to Penetrate Under Age 18 Years—U.S. Women and Men, NISVS 2012

Victimization type	Weighted %	95% CI	Estimated no. of victims
Raped as a minor <sup>a</sup>			
Females	<b>8.4</b>	<b>7.4, 9.5</b>	<b>10,231,000</b>
Completed forced penetration	5.7	4.9, 6.6	6,954,000
Completed alcohol/drug-facilitated penetration	3.5	2.8, 4.3	4,225,000
Attempted forced penetration	2.1	1.7, 2.6	2,550,000
Males	<b>0.7</b>	<b>0.5, 1.0</b>	<b>791,000</b>
Completed forced penetration	0.4	0.3, 0.7	498,000
Completed alcohol/drug-facilitated penetration	NR	NR	NR
Attempted forced penetration	NR	NR	NR
Made to penetrate as a minor <sup>b,c</sup>			
Males	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.1, 2.4</b>	<b>1,891,000</b>
Completed forced made to penetrate	0.8	0.5, 1.2	883,000
Completed alcohol/drug-facilitated made to penetrate	1.1	0.7, 1.9	1,313,000
Attempted forced made to penetrate	NR	NR	NR

Note: Boldface indicates statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ).

<sup>a</sup>A small subset of victims of completed rape could have also experienced attempted rape or completed or attempted being made to penetrate by the same perpetrator and the age at first could reflect those experiences.

<sup>b</sup>A small subset of victims of completed made to penetrate could have also experienced attempted made to penetrate or completed or attempted rape by the same perpetrator and the age at first could reflect those experiences.

<sup>c</sup>Estimates of made to penetrate as a minor for females was not statistically reliable.

NISVS, National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey; no., number; NR, not reported because relative SE >30% or ≤20 respondents.

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