

Just how many women *are* raped? (Is the one-in-five number accurate?)

The original statement that 1 in 5 women college-age and older have been raped or sexually assaulted came from a 1985 study by Mary Koss for MS Magazine. This is a controversial study for two reasons:

First, critics argued that the questions were ambiguous, and might permit any woman who'd regretted consensual sex afterwards to identify the intercourse as "rape."

Second, the 1-in-5 statistic did not match the number of actual reported rapes during that time. This isn't unusual, since we know that most rapes *aren't* reported.

However, subsequent studies have reinforced findings of 1-in-5, or even 1-in-4. Here are some additional studies that have verified the 1-in-5 conclusion:

- "Nearly one-fifth of women (18 percent) reported experiencing a completed or attempted rape at some time in their lives; one in 33 men (3 percent) reported experiencing a completed or attempted rape at some time in their lives." (National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey, November 1998.)
- The U.S. National Crime Victimization Survey of 1995 found that 432,000 women reported having been victims of "rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault." (Maguire, K. and A.L. Pastore. *Soucrebook of Criminal Justice Statistics*. Washington, D.C.: US dept. of Justice, 1995.) The CVS of 1998 found that the number of women reporting they have been raped had *increased* to 680,000.
- In the 1990's it was found that 20% of college women in a controlled randomized study reported that at some point in their lives they had "been forced to submit to sexual intercourse against their will." (Douglas, K.A., et. al. "Results from the 1995 National College Health Risk Behavior Survey." *Journal of American College Health*, 46 (1997): 55-66.)
- Seventy percent of rape survivors physically resisted when the assault became violent. (Warshaw, R. *I Never Called it Rape*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.)
- The Crime Victimization Surveys used by the Bureau of Justice Statistics has found repeatedly that only 10-16% of assaults which conform to the legal definitions of rape were reported. See for example: Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Uniform Crime Reports*. Washington, D.C." United States Dept. of Justice, 1995. And: Maguire, K. and A.L. Pastore. *Soucrebook of Criminal Justice Statistics*. Washington, D.C.: US dept. of Justice, 1995.
- Over ninety-two percent of rape reports are not false; 2-8% are found to be false accusations. (Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Uniform Crime Reports*. Washington, D.C." United States Dept. of Justice, 1995)

- From the Dept. of Justice web page: “The National Women's Study (NWS), a longitudinal survey of a national probability sample of adult women funded by the National Institute of Drug Abuse, found that approximately 13% of adult women had been victims of completed rape during their lifetime (Kilpatrick, Edmunds, and Seymour 1992; Resnick et al. 1993). In the one year period between the second and third interviews, 0.6% of adult women, or an estimated 683,000 women were victims of rape (Kilpatrick, Edmunds, and Seymour 1992). In the two years between the first and third interviews, 1.2% of the adult participants in the NWS were raped, producing an estimate that 1.1 million women were raped in the United States during this two year period (Kilpatrick et al. 1997).”
- “Using a definition of rape that includes forced vaginal, oral, and anal sex, the National Violence Against Women Survey found that one out of six U.S. women and one out of thirty-three U.S. men have experienced an attempted or completed rape as a child and/or adult. According to estimates, approximately 1.5 million women and 834,700 men are raped and/or physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually in the United States (Tjaden and Thoennes 1998, 2, 5).”
- “The National Crime Victimization Survey found that in 1996 more than two-thirds of rape/sexual assaults committed in the nation remained unreported (Ringel 1997, 3).”
- “The National Survey of Adolescents (NSA), a National Institute of Justice-funded study of a national household probability sample of 4,023 twelve- to seventeen-year-old adolescents, found that 8.1% of U.S. adolescents had been victims of at least one sexual assault (Kilpatrick and Saunders 1997; Kilpatrick et al. 2000). This indicates that an estimated 1.8 million 12- to 17-year-olds have been sexually assaulted.”

See:

Kilpatrick, D. G., C. Edmunds, and A. Seymour. 1992. *Rape in America: A Report to the Nation*. Arlington, VA: National Center for Victims of Crime; Charleston, SC: Medical University of South Carolina, Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center.

Resnick, H. S., R. E. Acierno, M. Holmes, D. G. Kilpatrick, and N. Jager. 1999. "Prevention of Post-rape Psychopathology: Preliminary Findings of a Controlled Acute Rape Treatment Study." *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 13 (4): 359-370.

Resnick, H. S., B. S. Dansky, B. E. Saunders, and C. L. Best. 1993. "Prevalence of Civilian Trauma and PTSD in a Representative National Sample of Women." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 61: 984-991.

Ringel, C. November 1997. *Criminal Victimization in 1996, Changes 1995-1996 with Trends 1993-1996*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Tjaden, P. and N. Thoennes. November 1998. "Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings From the National Violence Against Women Survey." *Research in Brief*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.