

Policy Brief

Cost of Sexual Violence in Iowa

This year 1 in 35 Iowa women aged 18-44 will experience sexual violence.



Their experiences place a huge burden on public funding streams and create social costs for those who are impacted.

Who is impacted?

1 in 50 Iowa girls (13-17 yrs)

1 in 120 Iowa children

1 in 96 Iowa adults

Sexual violence is a serious and costly public health problem in Iowa. In addition to its emotional toll, sexual violence causes substantial financial damage to the victims, their families, and society as whole. Injuries from sexual violence result in large expenditures by our systems of health care, law enforcement, criminal justice, and welfare. More important, acts of sexual violence lead to even greater costs that arise from lost productivity and the inability of victims and families to continue with activities of daily life.

To more clearly describe the societal burden of this problem, the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the University of Iowa Injury Prevention Research Center (IPRC) allocated funds to conduct a cost analysis. The full report, found at http://www.idph.state.ia.us/bh/sv_prevention.asp, enumerates the incidents of sexual violence in Iowa, the direct and indirect costs associated with it, and the costs to society of responding to it based on data from 2009.

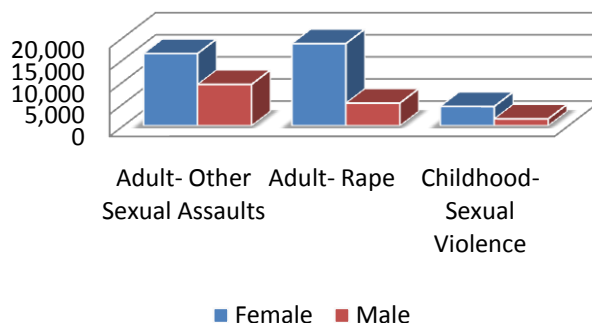
Data Sources

Sexual violence is any form of sexual activity that is unwanted, without any consent obtained or freely given. To determine the number of people victimized by sexual violence in Iowa, four sources of data were used: child protection services reports, Department of Justice data, and two population surveys of risk behaviors.

Results: People

In 2009, an estimated 55,340 individuals experienced sexual violence in Iowa. Of these, nearly three of every four were female and one in ten was under age 18. At least 595 victims were raped or sexually assaulted while incarcerated. There were nearly 39,000 rape incidents in 2009, with some victims subject to multiple rapes.

In 2009 more than 55,000 Iowans experience sexual violence



April 2012

Sexual violence in Iowa cost an estimated \$5.8 billion in fiscal year 2009, or \$1,875 per resident.

An estimated \$101 million in government money was spent as a result of sexual violence in Iowa.



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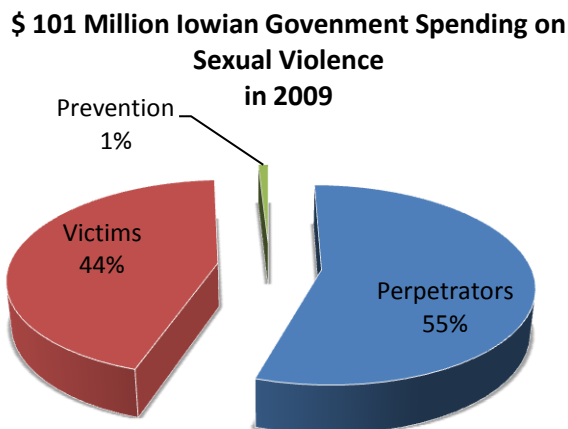
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Results: Costs

Sexual violence cost Iowans \$5.8 billion in 2009. More than 95% of that amount (\$5.5 billion) was indirect costs, including loss of work and impaired quality of life for victims and their families.

An estimated \$101 million in government money was spent as a result of sexual violence in Iowa, 55% on individuals known to have perpetrated sexual violence and a little over 44% on individuals victimized by sexual violence. Less than 1% of state and federal funds were spent to prevent sexual violence.



Recommendations

Research shows that sexual violence can be prevented before it occurs. Investing in comprehensive prevention programs that address its root causes will help ensure that

- child victims of sexual abuse receive early and prompt treatment to reduce the risk of later victimization or the social costs associated with it
- adolescent sex offenders receive treatment (instead of incarceration without treatment) to reduce the likelihood of future offenses
- organizations adopt policies that promote the safety of victims and accountability of perpetrators
- everyone understands the beliefs that condone or minimize sexual violence
- researchers continue to expand our knowledge of this problem and the IDPH plays a strong role in preventing sexual violence in Iowa.

With the IDPH/IPRC cost analysis, policymakers can now compare the true costs of sexual violence to the benefits of investing in prevention.