

ECONOMIC COSTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to assess the economic toll of sexual violence. Public and private funds are spent on crisis services, medical treatment, and the criminal justice responses. Work days are lost because of injury and illness. Businesses lose money through employee absences and sexual harassment suits. Victims pay for sexual violence out of their own pockets, and the public pays through provision of services to victims and their significant others. The cost for offender's incarceration, probation, treatment and other offender services adds to the total cost of sexual assault.

STATISTICS

CRIME STATISTICS

There was one violent crime every 21 seconds in 1998.¹

During 1998, approximately one in seven U.S. residents age 12 and over were victims of crime.²

The rate of violent crime decreased 7% from 1997 to 1998. In 1998, there were 37 violent victimizations and 217 property crimes per 1,000 U.S. residents age 12 and older.³

For overall violent crime and simple assault, the rates for males were 30% higher than for females in 1998; however, females suffered rape or sexual assault at a rate 14 times greater than males. The total number of attempted or completed rapes and sexual assaults in 1998 was estimated to be 200,000.⁴

COSTS OF VIOLENT CRIME

The cost of crime to victims in 1996 was an estimated \$450 billion a year when factors such as medical costs, lost earning, pain, suffering and lost quality of life were

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Crime in the United States 1998*. Washington, D.C. Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Department of Justice, 1999.

² Rennison, Callie M. *Criminal Victimization 1998: Changes 1997-98 with Trends 1993-98*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, 1999.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

considered.⁵ An estimated \$23 billion of the cost is attributed to lost productivity and almost \$145 billion is because of reduced quality of life.⁶

Violent crimes account for 1/3 of all crimes, but account for 95% of the total cost of crime. Most of the cost is attributable to the intangible costs of the victim's pain, suffering and lost quality of life.⁷

About 12% of total mental health costs is spent on crime victims.⁸

The estimated annual cost of crime in the United States, \$450 billion, is almost totally attributable to violent crime (\$426 billion), and exceeds the entire \$266 billion cost of the U.S. defense budget by 69%.⁹

COST OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Rape is most costly of all crimes to its victims. Total costs are estimated to be \$127 billion a year in the United States, excluding the costs of child sexual abuse.¹⁰

The cost for each sexual assault is \$110,000; because many rape victims are subjected to more than one sexual assault, the cost per rape is estimated to be \$87,000. The cost per sexual assault is broken down as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| • Short term medical care | \$ 500 |
| • Mental health services | 2,400 |
| • Lost productivity | 2,200 |
| • Pain and suffering | 104,900 |

The pain and suffering cost is based on these facts:¹¹

- Up to half of all victims suffer from at least one symptom of rape trauma syndrome;
- Rape victims are four times more likely to have an emotional breakdown than are non victims;
- 25% to 50% of sexual assault victims are likely to seek mental health services and victims often suffer from lifelong physical manifestations of sexual trauma.

⁵ Miller, Ted, Cohen, Mark & Wiersema, Brian. *Victim Costs and Consequences: A New Look*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justices, U.S. Department of Justice, 1996.

⁶ Miller, Ted R., Cohen, Mark A. And Rossman, Shelli B. "Victim Costs of Violent Crime and Resulting Injuries." *Health Affairs*, Winter, 1993.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Cohen, Mark; Miller, Ted. "The Cost of Mental Health Care for Victims of Crime." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*(13)(1):93-110, 1998.

⁹ Miller, Cohen, & Wiersema, 1996., and Hopf, Ted. "Russia and the U.S.: Growing Cooperation?" *Great Decisions: 1997*. Foreign Policy Association, New York, 1997.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Rape and sexual assault account for 9% of the 16 million violent crimes in the U.S.¹²

COSTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In 1988, sexual harassment cost the typical Fortune 500 company \$6.7 million per year, or \$282 per employee.¹³

Over a two year period, the U.S. government lost more than \$267 million in diminished productivity and turnover due to sexual harassment.¹⁴

90% of Fortune 500 companies surveyed received complaints of sexual harassment. More than 1/3 experienced lawsuits; more than 1/4 had repeated lawsuits.¹⁵

IMPACT ON THE VICTIM

RAPE AND PHYSICAL INJURY

32% of women and 16% of men raped since age 18 were physically injured in their most recent rape.¹⁶

2% of all rapes result in the death of the victim.¹⁷

Following is a breakdown of injury and death rates connected with sexual assault from 1987-1990:

- 229,000 victimizations
- 148,000 victims (some victims were raped more than once)
- 90,000 nonfatal physical injuries
- 6,000 hospitalizations from injuries
- 305 deaths

The monetary cost for rape accompanied by a physical injury in the early 1990s was:¹⁸

Total cost other than mental health:		\$ 6,228
Medical	\$1,367	
Emergency services	66	
Productivity	4,683	

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Klein Associates. *The 1988 Working Woman Survey Report*, 1988.

¹⁴ National Victim Center, 1991.

¹⁵ Klein, 1988.

¹⁶ Tjaden, Patricia & Thoennes, Nancy. *Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAW)*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, 1998.

¹⁷ Groth, Nicholas. *Men Who Rape: The Psychology of the Offender*. New York: Plenum Press, 1979.

¹⁸ Miller, Ted R., Cohen, Mark A. & Rossman, Shelli B. "Victim Costs of Violent Crime and Resulting Injuries." *Health Affairs*, Winter, 1993.

Administrative	112	
Total mental health cost:		36,306
Mental health medical	4,990	
Mental health productivity	1,465	
Quality of life lost to psychological injury	29,851	
TOTAL COST		\$42,534

MEDICAL CARE

Hospital emergency department personnel treat approximately 128,700 female adults annually for injuries related to rapes.¹⁹

In 1994, 17.6% of rape/sexual assault victims received medical care. They were most likely to receive medical care at an emergency room or hospital (46%), and next most likely to receive medical care at home or a neighbor's or friend's home (38.8%).²⁰

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Rape, childhood sexual abuse and domestic violence are among the most common causes of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in women. The chances that a woman will develop PTSD after being raped are 50-90%. Sexual assault is also closely associated with depression and anxiety disorders.²¹

Psychological injury results from 57% of completed sexual assaults, 37% of physical assaults, and 18% of robberies. Psychological injury ranges from severe psychological disorder to emotional distress. For rape, the ratio of severe disorder to distress is 1 to 4, compared with a ratio of 1 to 8 for other crimes.²²

30% of female stalking victims and 20% of male stalking victims seek psychological counseling following their victimization.²³

Up to 20% of mental health expenditures are used to treat violent crime victims.²⁴

¹⁹ *Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women*, 1998.

²⁰ Bureau of Justice Statistics. *National Crime Victimization Survey*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, 1994.

²¹ Population Information Program. *Population Reports: Ending Violence Against Women*. Population Information Program, Center for Communication Programs. The Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and Center for Health and Gender Equity, 2000.

²² Miller, Cohen and Rossman, 1993.

²³ Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998.

²⁴ Miller, Cohen, & Wiersema, 1996.

LOST WORK TIME AND PRODUCTIVITY

In 1990, 19.5% of sexual assault victims lost time from work. Victims of acquaintance rape were somewhat more likely to lose time from work. 79% of sexual assault victims lost 1-5 days; 21% lost 11 days or more.²⁵

6% of all violent crime victims lost time from work: 18% lost less than one day, 50% lost 1-5 days, 11% lost 6-10 days, and 15% lost 11 or more days.²⁶

Cost of lost work time was \$1,261 for sexual assault, \$741 for robbery, \$476 for physical assault, and \$1,411 for arson.²⁷

THEFT AND DAMAGE TO PROPERTY

Crimes of violence often include theft and property damage resulting in direct monetary loss to victims. In 1990, 30% of crime victims lost less than \$50, 11% lost from \$50-\$99; 16% lost \$100-\$249, 8% lost \$250-\$499, 15% lost \$500 or more.²⁸

15% of all sexual assault victims incurred a direct economic loss from the crime, mostly due to damage to property.²⁹

RESPONSE

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COSTS

Criminal justice funds spent due to sexual violence include: law enforcement expenses, court costs, criminal justice personnel, public education, and incarceration of the offender.

In 1990, federal, state and local governmental spending for criminal justice activities was \$74 billion – an increase of 63% since 1985.³⁰

Spending on criminal justice services in Illinois rose from \$1.8 billion in 1974 to \$2.7 billion in 1990. In 1990, \$230/year was spent per resident.³¹

²⁵ Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1990*. U.S. Department of Justice, Feb. 1992.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Miller, Cohen and Rossman, 1993.

²⁸ Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1991*. U.S. Department of Justice, 1993.

In 1996, 30,057 felony convictions in state courts across the country were for sexual assault. On average, rapists served an average of 61 months or 51% of their 120 month sentence.³²

In Illinois, 10% of alleged child abuse cases involving a caretaker were cases of sexual abuse. Arrest rates for child sexual abuse in Illinois are expected to increase by 10% between the years 1988-2000.³³

MEDICAL CARE

Sexual assault victims require a range of medical services. These include emergency medical care following the sexual assault, pregnancy testing, HIV testing, testing for sexually transmitted diseases and, possibly, abortion. The total cost of these services is unknown.

One study found that 43% of sexual assault victims had evidence of sexually transmitted diseases that required medical treatment.³⁴

31% of violent crime victims incurred medical expenses. Of these victims, 11% spent less than \$50, 20% spent \$50-\$249, 37% spent \$250 or more and 32% listed their expenses as unknown. About 60% of violent crime victims received care in the emergency room.³⁵

64% of violent crime victims seeking medical assistance had health insurance or state-funded medical care.³⁶

VICTIM SERVICES

There are more than 2,000 victim service programs in the United States. Millions of dollars are dispensed each year by the federal government for victim services through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). The total expenditure for victim services exceeded \$537 million in FY2000. Most of these funds are for programs dealing with sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse.³⁷

³² Brown, Jodi; Lagan, Patrick. *Felony Sentences in State Courts, 1996*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, 1999.

³³ Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. *Trends and Issues 1990.*, Chicago, IL 1991.

³⁴ Miller, Cohen and Rossman, 1993.

³⁵ Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2001.