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# MONTANA Fact[or]s

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## Sexual Violence In Montana

**Sexual violence is a major social problem in the United States** and the consequences of this violence may be long-lasting. Sexual assaults are associated with a range of both short- and long-term problems, including physical injury and illness, psychological or mental distress and in some cases, death.<sup>1</sup> The consequences go far beyond the individual victims, affecting families, children and friends. The consequences of rape, battering, and other sexual assaults also impact our social and healthcare delivery services, and our public health and criminal justice systems. This issue of Montana Fact[or]s is devoted to describing the victims of sexual assault, as well as the reported characteristics of their perpetrators in these acts of violence. The data are based on self-reported victimizations of

sexual assaults of Montana adults as collected through the Montana Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) in 2007.

The BRFSS is a population-based telephone interview survey of a random selection of Montana adults, age 18 years and older, in the non-institutionalized population; all respondents are anonymous and data are weighted to represent Montana's adult population. In 2007, the Montana Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey included questions on sexual assault, from unwanted touching to completed rapes. The sexual assault data are based on interviews with 5995 adults in 2007.

## Lifetime Prevalence of Sexual Violence

### Lifetime Prevalence of Rape

For completed and attempted sexual assaults, the BRFSS questions referred to sex without consent, which is a broader category than "forcible rape" as defined by the Uniform Crime Reports from police department records.<sup>2</sup> Many crimes go unreported to the police and only those crimes that are cleared by arrest become part of these official crime statistics. BRFSS questions

ask about both lifetime and past-year occurrence of non-consensual sex. National studies have shown that self-reported prevalence of forcible rape or sexual assault is considerably higher than the rate of forcible rape reported to police.<sup>3</sup> Available data greatly underestimate the true magnitude of the problem as rape is one of the most underreported crimes.<sup>4</sup> For these reasons, one would expect

the prevalence from the BRFSS questions, as with victimization or other self-reported studies,<sup>5</sup> to be higher than the rates calculated from official police reports.

The BRFSS asked respondents questions about unwanted sex. For the survey, itself, the terms "sexual assault" and "rape" were intentionally not used in the questions, as respondents may not have associated such experiences with these terms. Instead, the questions asked if respondents had experienced "sex against their will or without their consent". "Unwanted sex includes things like putting anything into the vagina (if female), anus, or mouth or making the respondents do these things to them after they said or showed that they didn't want to" participate. "It includes times when the respondents were unable to consent, for example, were drunk or asleep, or thought they would be hurt or punished if refused." The BRFSS asked: "Has anyone EVER had sex with you after you said or showed that you didn't want them to or without your consent?"

■ In 2007, 1 in 20 (5.3%)—or an estimated 34,495 Montana adults reported being the victim of sex against their will or without their consent (what is called **completed "rape"** in this report) at some time in their lifetime. See Table.

■ Persons with a reported disability were two and one-half times more likely (10%) to report being raped than adults without a disability (4%). Adults with household incomes less than \$25,000 per year had higher rates of reported rape (8%-12%) than adults with higher household incomes (<5%). See Figure 1.

■ Among Montana adult men, one in a hundred (0.9%)—or an estimated 2,845 men—reported ever having sex without their consent in their lifetime.

■ The prevalence of lifetime sex without consent (rape) was more than 10 times higher among women than men. One in ten Montana adult women (9.6%) reported being raped in their lifetime. This means in Montana, an estimated 31,495 adult women have had sex without their consent at some time during their lives.

### Lifetime Prevalence of Attempted Rape

■ Slightly more than 7% of all Montana adults have been the victim of attempted rape or sexual assault in their lifetime or approximately 45,492 adults.

■ As with completed rape, adults with incomes less than \$25,000 were significantly more likely to be victims of attempted rape in their lifetimes. Twice as many adults with disability (11%) were victims of attempted rape in their lifetimes than adults without a reported disability (6%).

■ Females (11%) were almost four times more likely to be victims of attempted rape than males (3%) in their lifetime.

Sexual Assault Experiences Reported by Montana Adults, 2007 (with 95% confidence intervals)						
	Ever Victim of Sexual Assault †			Ever Victim of Attempted Sexual Assault ‡		
	Unwt. N	Wt %	95% CI	Unwt. N	Wt %	95% CI
<b>All Adults</b>	316	5.3	4.6 - 6.1	387	7.2	6.4 - 8.2
<b>Sex:</b>						
Male	19	0.9	0.5 - 1.6	62	3.2	2.3 - 4.3
Female	297	9.6	8.3 - 11.0	325	11.2	9.8 - 12.7
<b>Age:</b>						
18 - 24	10	4.3	2.2 - 8.3	23	8.0	5.0 - 12.6
25 - 34	32	5.5	3.6 - 8.2	47	8.3	5.9 - 11.7
35 - 44	70	7.8	5.9 - 10.3	71	8.2	6.2 - 10.7
45 - 54	97	6.6	5.2 - 8.3	112	8.7	7.0 - 10.8
55 - 64	68	4.7	3.6 - 6.3	79	5.9	4.6 - 7.6
65+	36	2.2	1.5 - 3.1	53	4.1	3.0 - 5.6
<b>Education:</b>						
<High School	15	3.6	1.9 - 6.8	22	7.9	4.4 - 13.8
High School	78	4.6	3.4 - 6.1	92	5.7	4.4 - 7.4
Some College	116	7.0	5.6 - 8.8	125	8.1	6.5 - 10.0
College Degree	106	4.8	3.8 - 6.0	147	7.8	6.4 - 9.5
<b>Income:</b>						
<\$15,000	57	11.9	8.6 - 16.3	58	13.5	9.8 - 18.3
\$15,000 - \$24,999	79	8.0	5.8 - 10.9	89	10.6	8.0 - 14.0
\$25,000 - \$49,999	79	4.6	3.4 - 6.0	100	6.2	4.8 - 8.0
\$50,000 - \$74,999	40	3.9	2.8 - 5.5	55	5.5	4.1 - 7.4
\$75,000+	26	2.7	1.8 - 4.3	43	4.6	3.3 - 6.4
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>						
White, non-Hispanic	273	5.1	4.4 - 5.9	330	6.7	5.9 - 7.7
AI/AN*	19	5.6	2.8 - 10.9	33	11.6	7.2 - 18.2
Other or Hispanic**	19	8.9	4.9 - 15.7	21	12.5	7.3 - 20.7
<b>Disability:</b>						
Disability	145	10.1	8.2 - 12.3	144	11.1	9.0 - 13.5
No Disability	170	3.9	3.2 - 4.7	241	6.1	5.2 - 7.2
<b>Region:</b>						
1- Eastern MT	21	3.5	2.0 - 6.1	32	6.3	3.9 - 10.1
2- N Central MT	55	5.5	3.9 - 7.7	70	7.3	5.4 - 9.6
3- S Central MT	39	4.9	3.4 - 7.2	61	8.5	6.3 - 11.4
4- Southwest MT	71	5.6	4.2 - 7.5	76	6.3	4.9 - 8.1
5- Northwest MT	121	5.7	4.6 - 7.2	141	7.6	6.2 - 9.4

\* American Indian or Alaska Native only

\*\* All other non-White (including multiracial) or Hispanic

† Sample Total=5197; Population Estimate=642,797

‡ Sample Total=5189; Population Estimate=641,807

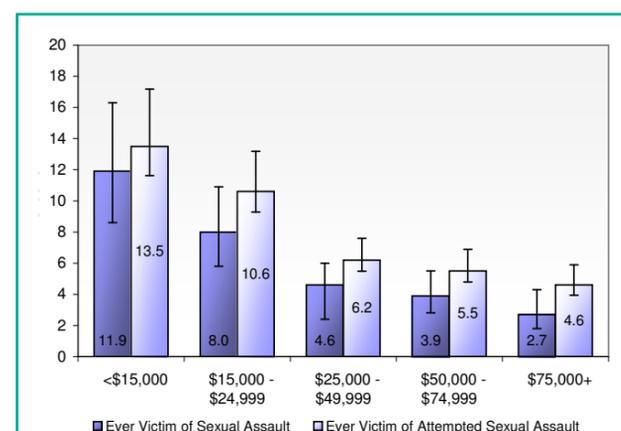


Figure 1 Prevalence of Ever Victimized by Income, Montana Adults, 2007

## Prevalence of Sexual Violence within the Past Year

### Victims of Rape in Past Year

- Of respondents who reported ever being raped, almost **4% reported the rape occurred within the past year**. This equates to approximately 0.3% or approximately 1300 of all Montana adults reported sex against their will or without their consent in the past twelve months. According to Montana official police reports, in 2007, 350 Montanans reported being raped and of these only 185 were adults, the remaining victims were 3-17 years of age.<sup>6</sup> From the BRFSS results, seven times as many adults reported being victims of rape in the past year than were reported to police agencies in Montana.
- Adults in the **youngest age group of 18-24 (0.8%) reported the highest prevalence of rape in the past year** but not significantly greater than other age groups, except adults older than 65, where no cases were reported.
- Women were the victims of the vast majority of rapes that occurred in the past year. Of **Montana adult women overall, approximately 1 in 250 or 0.4% of all Montana women reporting being sexually assaulted (raped) in the past year**. Too few cases made the male victimization estimates too unstable to report.

### Victims of Attempted Rape in Past Year

- Of those who were ever victims of attempted sexual assault, about 14% were victims within the past twelve months. This equates to about **0.9% of all Montana adults being victims of attempted rape in the past year** or approximately 5,490 adults.
- About **1% of women or 4234 were attempted rape victims in the past year and about 0.4% of men or 1256 were attempted rape victims in the past year**. Hence, about three-fourths of all attempted rape victims were women and one-quarter were men in 2007. No statistically significant risk characteristics were found among attempted rape victims based on other sociodemographic characteristics. *See Figure 2.*

### Other Unwanted Sexual Experiences in Past Year

- The 2007 BRFSS asked two questions about other unwanted sexual experiences the respondent may have had in the past twelve months. One question asked the respondent, "In the past 12 months, has anyone touched sexual parts of your body after you said or showed that you didn't want them to, or without your consent (for example being groped or fondled)?"
- During this time frame, 1% or approximately 7,143 Montana adults reported that sexual touching (being groped or fondled) occurred without their consent in the past twelve months. About an equal number of men and women reported being the victim of such behavior and adults aged 18-24 were more likely to report such behavior than adults aged 55 and older.

The second question about unwanted sexual experiences in the past 12 months asked, "Has anyone exposed you to unwanted sexual situations that did not involve physical touching? Examples include things like sexual harassment, someone exposing sexual parts of their body to you, being seen by a peeping Tom, or someone making you look at sexual photos or movies?"

- Approximately 7,790 or 1.2% of adults reported being exposed to unwanted sexual situations that did not involve physical touching (i.e., sexual harassment, flashing, peeping), during the past twelve months. Again, younger adults aged 18-24 were more likely to report experiencing this type of victimization than adults aged 55 and older.

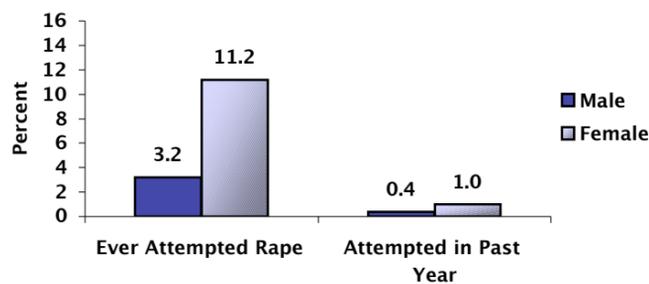


Figure 2 Victims of Attempted Rape by Gender

## Reported Relationship of the Perpetrator to the Victim

Respondents were asked about the relationship to the victim in the most recent incident of unwanted or attempted sex.

- More than one-quarter (27%) of the victims reported their perpetrators were either a former or current intimate partner** (this category includes fiancé, live-in partner, spouse, current or former boyfriend or girlfriend). Almost two out of five (39%) victims reported the perpetrator as a date, friend or acquaintance. Only **12% of the perpetrators were total strangers** and an almost equal percentage (11%) were relatives (including

parents) to the victims. *See Figure 3.* These proportions held up across all the demographic subgroup analyses.

- In terms of gender, these perpetrator/victim percentages were consistent with the female victim self-reports. For **male victims**, however, only **10% reported their perpetrators as either former or current intimate partners**, more than half (53%) as dates, friends or acquaintances, 16% as total strangers and 4% as relatives, with almost one-fifth classified as "other".

- Overall, the vast majority of the perpetrators were reported to be male (89%). **For women, 98% of the perpetrators were men.** However, for male victims, women and men were about equally likely to be the perpetrator.

Consistent with findings from major sexual violence research, when looking at the relationship of the victim to the offender, **the victim knew the offender in more than half of the completed and attempted sexual assaults.**

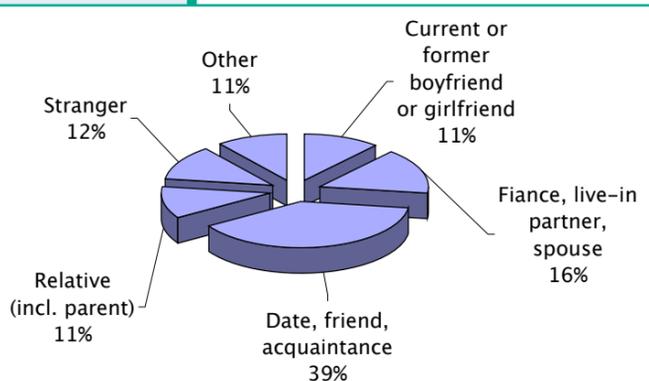


Figure 3 Relationship of Perpetrator to Sexual Violence Victim, Montana Adults, 2007

### Resources

In Montana, there is help for victims to find answers to questions that they may have about medical, legal, and emotional concerns resulting from sexual assault. Sexual assault and domestic violence programs are located in communities across the state of Montana. For information about a victim assistance program in your area, call your local law enforcement agency or the Crime Victim Compensation program at (406) 444-3653 or 1-800-498-6455.<sup>7</sup>

On an individual level, if you are a victim of sexual assault and you would like to talk to a trained counselor, please call the **National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)**. This hotline is part of the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) and provides free and confidential counseling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition, the [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org) website provides listings of local sexual assault crisis centers and hotlines by zip code and state.

Also see the **National Sexual Violence Resource Center, www.nsvrc.org**, the **National Women's Health Information Center, www.womenshealth.gov** or the **CDC Resources on Sexual Violence, http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/sexualviolence/resources.html**.

### Endnotes

- <http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/sexualviolence/index.html>
- Uniform Crime Reports at <http://www.fbi.gov>
- National Incident-Based Reporting system at [www.jrsa.org/ibrcc/](http://www.jrsa.org/ibrcc/)
- National Center for Injury Prevention and Control [www.cdc.gov/ncipc](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc)
- National Crime Victimization Survey at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/cvict.htm>
- See the Montana Board of Crime Control, <http://mbcc.mt.gov/>. Crime in Montana, 2006-2007 Report, MBCC, Montana Board of Crime Control, Helena, MT, June 2008.
- See, MBCC, "Talking Helps: Information for Victims of Sexual Assault" and also web address: [www.doj.mt.gov/victims/victimcompensation.asp](http://www.doj.mt.gov/victims/victimcompensation.asp)

### Survey Limitations

The BRFSS relies on self-reported data. This type of survey has certain limitations: many times, respondents have the tendency to underreport some behaviors that may be considered socially unacceptable (e.g., smoking, heavy alcohol use); conversely, respondents may over report behaviors that are desirable (e.g., physical activity, nutrition).

### Background

The Montana Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) has been collecting and reporting state-specific, population-based estimates of health-related data since 1984. The purpose of this statewide telephone survey of Montana residents aged 18 and older is to gather information regarding personal health risk behaviors, selected medical conditions, and the prevalence of preventive health care practices among Montana adults. These BRFSS results have been used by public health agencies, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, and others to develop programs that promote the health of Montana adults and reduce risks that contribute to the leading causes of death in the state. A full set of Montana yearly questionnaires and health indicators can be found on the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) BRFSS database query system website at [www.brfss.mt.gov](http://www.brfss.mt.gov). The CDC website ([www.cdc.gov/brfss](http://www.cdc.gov/brfss)) also provides national, state, and some local area prevalence estimates of health indicators, as well as access to downloadable datasets for further analyses.

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