



UAA Justice Center
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Results from the 2020 Alaska Victimization Survey

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Overview and history of AVS

- Provides estimates for the lifetime and annual prevalence of rape and physical intimate partner violence against women in Alaska.
 - Documents the scope of the problem over time.
 - Increases awareness about the problem and fosters the collective movement to address these types of violence.
 - Validates the experiences of the victim-survivors and lets them know they are not alone, not unseen, and not forgotten.
- Conducted statewide surveys in 2010, 2015, and 2020 with goal of conducting survey every five years.
 - 13 regional surveys were conducted 2011 – 2015
 - Overall, almost 13,000 women in Alaska have participated in these surveys
- Joint effort between the Alaska Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA; funders) and the University of Alaska Anchorage Justice Center (research implementation).



AVS Methodology

- General methodology (all iterations)
 - General population survey of adult women residing in Alaska.
 - Respondents randomly selected and contacted by landlines and cell phones.
 - Survey modeled after the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) administered by the U.S. CDC.
 - Questions about victimization are “behaviorally specific” and include a wide range of violence against women beyond just rape and physical intimate partner violence
 - Survey procedures designed to maximize the safety and confidentiality of respondents.
- 2020 Survey data collection methods
 - Washington state survey team
 - Phone surveys conducted from July – November 2020
 - 2100 participants
 - Each case was weighted to match proportions in general adult Alaska female population (265,572) using three strata: Geographic region, race/ethnicity, and age



Lifetime and past year estimates of physical intimate partner violence and rape

Type of Violence	Lifetime		Past year	
	%	N	%	N
Physical intimate partner violence (composite)	48.0	127,248	6.9	18,314
Threats of physical violence	28.5	75,347	2.6	6,873
Physical violence	46.8	123,987	6.5	17,198
Rape (composite)	40.5	106,937	3.4	8,791
Alcohol- or drug-involved sexual penetration	27.5	72,654	2.1	5,596
Forcible sexual penetration	27.7	73,203	2.2	5,712
IPV, rape, or both (composite)	57.7	152,556	8.1	21,217

Note: In prior AVS tables and reports, the term "sexual violence" has been used to refer to rape (both alcohol- and drug-involved and forcible). Moving forward, the AVS team will use the term "rape" to refer to alcohol- and drug-involved and forcible penetration, and the term "sexual violence" will be used as a broader term which includes rape, unwanted/uninvited sexual situations, coerced sexual activity, and/or sexual harassment.

Changes over time: 2010-2020

Type of Violence	Lifetime (%)			Past Year (%)		
	2010	2015	2020	2010	2015	2020
Physical intimate partner violence (composite)	47.6	40.4	48.0	9.4	6.4	6.9
Threats of physical violence	31.0	25.6	28.5	5.8	3.0	2.6
Physical violence	44.8	39.6	46.8	8.6	5.9	6.5
Rape (composite)	37.1	33.1	40.5	4.3	2.9	3.4
Alcohol- or drug-involved sexual penetration	26.8	22.6	27.5	3.6	2.0	2.1
Forcible sexual penetration	25.6	23.5	27.7	2.5	1.6	2.2
IPV, rape, or both (composite)	58.6	50.3	57.7	11.8	8.1	8.1



Comparing Alaska's prevalence to national prevalence

	2010			2015		
	AVS (%)	NISVS (%)	Alaska/US difference	AVS (%)	NISVS (%)	Alaska/US difference
Physical IPV – lifetime	47.6	32.9	1.4	40.4	30.6	1.3
Physical IPV – past year	9.4	4.0	2.4	6.4	2.9	2.2
Rape – lifetime	37.1	18.3	2.0	33.1	21.3	1.6
Rape – past year	4.3	1.1	3.9	2.9	1.2	2.4

Note. As of March 2023, National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) data for 2020 were unavailable.

2010 NISVS report: https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf

2015 NISVS report: <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/2015data-brief508.pdf>



New results: Experience- and self-labels and help-seeking behaviors

Primary prevention (preventing from happening in first place) is “the ideal.”

However, **secondary and tertiary prevention** (addressing VAW once it has happened to prevent it from happening again and to alleviate its impacts) **are unfortunate but pertinent concerns.**

Secondary and tertiary prevention usually require **those who have experienced VAW to disclose or seek help...**

...which usually requires **them to label or define the experience as a problem and/or themselves as victims.**



Research questions

1. What percent of Alaskan women who have experienced violence label those *experiences* using violence against women (VAW) labels?
2. What percent of Alaskan women who have experienced violence label *themselves* as victims or other victimization-related identity in relation to those experiences?
3. Is the use of experience- or self-labels related to perceiving a need for services and/or talking to the police?



Experience-and self-labels

If survey participants indicated that they had experienced one of the many forms of victimization in the survey (including partner psychological aggression and sexual harassment), they were given the following prompt and questions:

Before we conclude the survey, we want to ask a few final questions about how you define the things that you told me have happened to you and how you think about yourself in relation to those experiences.

- *Do you use any specific terms to define **those things** that happened to you?*
 - *If needed: For example, do you use terms like... rape, stalking, or violence?*
- *Do you use any specific terms to define **yourself** in relation to those things that happened to you?*
 - *If needed: For example, do you use terms like... victim, survivor, person who has been harmed?*



Intimate partner violence (IPV) label prevalence

Labeled experiences as...	Physical aggression (n = 927)	Psychological aggression (n = 1157)	Coercive control and entrapment (n = 1083)
Abuse	16.2	14.4	14.6
Domestic abuse/violence	16.8	13.8	13.8
Intimate partner abuse/violence	4.4	3.9	4.0
Violence	3.7	2.8	3.0
Emotional/mental/psychological/verbal abuse/violence	N/A ^a	3.8	3.7
No specific terms to label experiences	25.2	29.3	28.5
Labeled themselves as...^b			
Victim	8.7	9.0	9.5
Survivor	29.2	24.6	25.4
Victim-survivor	8.9	7.0	7.9
Person who has been harmed	3.4	3.6	2.8
Person who has been victimized	4.5	4.1	4.4
No specific terms to label themselves	42.9	48.3	47.1

Stalking label prevalence

- Experience labels
 - 9.6% labeled their experiences as *stalking*
 - 9.3% labeled their experiences as *sexual harassment*
 - 23.4% did not use any specific terms to label their experiences
- Self-labeling
 - 11.6% used the label *victim*
 - 26.6% used the label *survivor*
 - 8.9% used the label *victim-survivor*
 - 42.3% did not use any specific terms to label themselves



Sexual violence label prevalence

	Unwanted or uninvited sexual situation (n = 1417)	Alcohol or drug involved rape (n = 442)	Forcible rape (n = 555)	Sexual experiences involving pressure or coercion (n = 599)
Labeled experiences as...				
Being bothered/bothering	4.5	_a	_a	_a
Molestation	7.0	6.7	8.0	8.0
Rape	N/A ^b	28.5	27.9	19.8
Sexual abuse	9.6	13.4	12.0	12.8
Sexual assault	9.6	15.0	16.9	13.5
Sexual violence	2.8	_a	5.5	4.4
Sexual harassment	9.4	N/A ^b	N/A ^b	9.7
Unwanted sexual contact	9.4	12.0	10.8	9.2
Violence	2.3	_a	_a	_a
No specific terms to label experiences	30.5	24.1	18.6	22.4
Labeled themselves as...^c				
Victim	9.0	13.9	10.7	9.5
Survivor	21.2	29.4	33.6	28.3
Victim-survivor	6.8	9.9	11.5	10.9
Person who has been harmed	3.1	_a	4.8	_a
Person who has been victimized	4.7	4.5	6.1	4.9
No specific terms to label themselves	51.8	38.4	34.9	41.8

Summary of results

- Experience-labels
 - Minimal agreement on terms used to label experiences
 - Most common experience label: ~1/4 of women who had experienced alcohol-or drug-involved rape used term *rape*
 - Even among those who experienced physical partner aggression, ~1/6 used term *abuse* and ~1/6 used *domestic abuse/violence*
 - ~1/4 of IPV victims, 1/4 of stalking victims, and 1/5 to 1/4 of sexual violence victims did not use any specific terms to label their experiences.
- Self-labels
 - Most common self-label was *survivor*, with 1/4 to 1/3 endorsing this label
 - Roughly 1/10 used the self-label *victim* across all subsamples
 - ~2/5 to 1/2 of IPV victims, 2/5 of stalking victims, and 1/3 to 1/2 of sexual violence victims did not use any specific terms to label themselves



Experience- and self-labels and perceiving a need for services and/or talking to the police

- Sample: 1284 AVS participants who had ever experienced physical aggression by an intimate partner, drug- or alcohol-facilitated or forcible sexual rape, and/or stalking
- Independent variables:
 - Any label for experiences
 - Any label for self
 - Victim self-label
 - Survivor self-label
- Dependent variables:
 - Perceived need for...
 - legal assistance
 - victim advocacy services
 - shelter or safe housing
 - medical care
 - Talked to the police

Table 1. Sample descriptives (n = 1284)

	%
Age	56.0 (16.3) [mean (s.d.)]
Race	
American Indian/Alaska Native (Y/N)	17
White (Y/N)	89
ACE score	3.2 (2.2) [mean (s.d.)]
Applied any label to experiences (Y/N)	71
Applied any label to self (Y/N)	53
Applied "victim" label to self (Y/N)	16
Applied "survivor" label to self (Y/N)	30
Perceived need for services (Y/N)	40
Legal assistance	17
Victim advocacy	15
Shelter or safe housing	19
Medical care	21
Talked to police (Y/N)	26

Note. N varies for each variable due to missing data. Race variables (American Indian or Alaska Native and White), "victim" and "survivor" labels, and the types of perceived service needs are not mutually exclusive.

Is the use of experience- or self-labels related to perceiving a need for services and/or talking to the police?

- Both applying some kind of label to one's experiences with VAW and applying a label to oneself in relation to those experiences approximately doubled the odds of perceiving a need for formal services.
- The significance of self-labels seemed to be driven by the “survivor” label, as using a “victim” label was not related to need perceptions, but a “survivor” label doubled (or even tripled) the odds of perceiving a need for formal services.
- Applying some kind of label to one's experiences with VAW almost doubled the odds of talking to the police, and, again, use of the “survivor” self-label significantly increased the odds of talking to the police.





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Appendix A: Violence measures for main prevalence estimates

Physical intimate partner violence includes two measures:

1. Threats of physical violence by intimate partners
 - Have your romantic or sexual partners made threats to physically harm you?
2. Physical violence by intimate partners
 - Have your romantic or sexual partners...
 - Slapped you?
 - Pushed or shoved you?
 - Hit you with a fist or something hard?
 - Kicked you?
 - Hurt you by pulling your hair?
 - Slammed you against something?
 - Tried to hurt you by choking or suffocating you?
 - Beaten you?
 - Burned you on purpose?
 - Used a knife or gun on you?

Rape includes two measures:

1. Alcohol- or drug-involved sexual penetration
 - When you were alcohol or drug intoxicated and unable to consent, has anyone...
 - Had vaginal sex with you?
 - Made you receive anal sex?
 - Made you perform oral sex?
 - Made you receive oral sex?
2. Forcible sexual penetration:
 - Has anyone used physical force or threats to physically harm you to...
 - Make you have vaginal sex?
 - Make you receive anal sex?
 - Make you perform oral sex?
 - Make you receive oral sex?
 - Put their fingers or an object in your vagina or anus?
 - Try to have vaginal, oral, or anal sex with you?



Appendix B: Data weighting

Each case was weighted to match prevalence in general adult Alaska female population (265,572) using three “strata” and 120 possible weights

- Geographic region (6)
 - Gulf Coast (Kenai, Kodiak, Valdez, Cordova)
 - Northwestern, Western, and Southwestern (Nome, North Slope, Northwest Arctic, Aleutians East and West, Bethel, Bristol Bay, Dillingham, Kusilvak, Lake & Peninsula)
 - Interior (Denali, Fairbanks Northstar, Southeast Fairbanks, Yukon-Koyukuk)
 - Southeast (Haines, Hoonah-Angoon, Juneau, Ketchikan, Petersburg, Prince of Wales-Hyder, Sitka, Skagway, Wrangell, Yakutat)
 - Anchorage
 - Mat-Su Valley
- Racial identity (4)
 - American Indian/Alaska Native
 - Asian/Black/Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - White
 - Two or more racial identities
- Age (5)
 - 18-24 (Gen Z)
 - 25-39 (Millennials)
 - 40-54 (Gen X)
 - 55-74 (Boomers)
 - 75+ (Silent)



Appendix C: FAQ

Why not use data from law enforcement agencies on reports of intimate partner violence and sexual assault?

Data from law enforcement only include incidents that were reported to the police. Numerous studies, including national victimization surveys, have found that the majority of individuals who experience rape/sexual assault and nearly half of those who experience intimate partner violence do not report their victimization to the police. Therefore, the best way to gather data on crime victimization is to ask a large number of individuals whether or not they have been victimized, and make estimates based on those data. This is what a victimization survey is!

Why doesn't the AVS include men?

Although we would like to include men in the AVS, doing so is too costly for our current level of funding. In order to generate reliable estimates, we need a certain number of the sample to have been victimized. If we included men in the sample we would likely have to at least double our sample size, which would be very costly. Even then, we may not get reliable estimates for men because we know from national victimization surveys that do include men that men experience intimate partner violence and sexual violence at lower rates than women. Therefore we would probably need to collect an even bigger sample of men than women to get reliable estimates.



Appendix D: Impacts of COVID-19

43.2% Self or other primary breadwinner in home experienced unemployment or reduction in work hours as a result of COVID-19	36.7% Household's financial stability negatively or very negatively affected by COVID-19 pandemic	84.2% More members of household home on a regular basis than would be otherwise during COVID-19 work and social isolation restrictions
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Percent of adult women in Alaska who experienced past year IPV, rape, or both; by whether they experienced impacts of COVID-19

		Experienced past year IPV, rape, or both (%)
Self or other primary breadwinner in home experienced unemployment or reduction in work hours as a result of COVID-19	No	5.7
	Yes	11.5
Household's financial stability negatively or very negatively affected by COVID-19 pandemic	No	6.1
	Yes	11.9
More members of household home on a regular basis than would be otherwise during COVID-19 work and social isolation restrictions	No	10.6
	Yes	7.9

Note. Both un/underemployment and negative financial impact were significantly related to experiencing past year IPV, rape, or both at the $p < 0.05$ threshold.

Appendix E: National victimization data

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Statistics



October 2021, NCJ 301775

Criminal Victimization, 2020

Rachel E. Morgan, Ph.D., and Alexandra Thompson, BJS Statisticians

To better
understand
Alaska's trends
over time

TABLE 1

Number and rate of violent victimizations, by type of crime, 2016–2020

Type of violent crime	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020*	
	Number	Rate per 1,000 ^a	Number	Rate per 1,000 ^a	Number	Rate per 1,000 ^a	Number	Rate per 1,000 ^a	Number	Rate per 1,000 ^a
Violent crime^b	5,353,820 †	19.7 †	5,612,670 †	20.6 †	6,385,520 †	23.2 †	5,813,410 †	21.0 †	4,558,150	16.4
Rape/sexual assault ^c	298,410	1.1	393,980	1.4	734,630 †	2.7 †	459,310	1.7	319,950	1.2
Robbery	458,810	1.7	613,840 †	2.3 †	573,100	2.1	534,420	1.9	437,260	1.6
Assault	4,596,600 †	16.9 †	4,604,850 †	16.9 †	5,077,790 †	18.4 †	4,819,680 †	17.4 †	3,800,950	13.7
Aggravated assault	1,040,580 †	3.8 †	993,170 ‡	3.6 ‡	1,058,040 †	3.8 †	1,019,490 ‡	3.7 ‡	812,180	2.9
Simple assault	3,556,020 †	13.1 †	3,611,680 †	13.3 †	4,019,750 †	14.6 †	3,800,190 †	13.7 †	2,988,770	10.7
Violent crime excluding simple assault^d	1,797,790	6.6 ‡	2,000,990 †	7.3 †	2,365,770 †	8.6 †	2,013,220 †	7.3 †	1,569,390	5.6
Selected characteristics of violent crime										
Domestic violence ^e	1,068,120	3.9	1,237,960 †	4.5 †	1,333,050 †	4.8 †	1,164,540 ‡	4.2 ‡	856,750	3.1
Intimate partner violence ^f	597,200	2.2	666,310 ‡	2.4 ‡	847,230 †	3.1 †	695,060 ‡	2.5 ‡	484,830	1.7
Stranger violence	2,082,410	7.7	2,034,100	7.5	2,493,750	9.1 †	2,254,740	8.1	1,973,200	7.1

Note: Details may not sum to totals due to rounding. Categories of violent crime include rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault, and they include threatened, attempted, and completed occurrences of those crimes. See appendix table 2 for standard errors.

*Comparison year.

†Difference with comparison year is significant at the 95% confidence level.

‡Difference with comparison year is significant at the 90% confidence level.

^aRate is per 1,000 persons age 12 or older. See appendix table 11 for person populations.

^bIncludes rape or sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Excludes homicide because the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) is based on interviews with victims.

^cSee *Methodology* for details on the measurement of rape or sexual assault in the NCVS.

^dIncludes rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault.

^eIncludes the subset of violent victimizations that were committed by intimate partners or family members.

^fIncludes the subset of violent victimizations that were committed by current or former spouses, boyfriends, or girlfriends.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2016–2020.

Between 2015 and 2020, past 12-month experiences with sexual assault/rape stayed relatively stable, with a spike in 2018. That spike would cause lifetime rates to spike even while past year rates stayed the same between 2015 and 2020.

Between 2015 and 2020, past 12-month experiences with IPV fluctuated up and down, with 2020's rate being significantly lower than 2015's rate, but 2019's rate being closer to 2015. These data provide a little less clarity about patterns compared to the sexual assault/rape data.

2015

Rape/sexual assault

rate per 1000:

1.6

2015

IPV rate per 1000:

3.0