

# Bureau of Justice Statistics Executive Summary

January 1997, NCJ-163931

## *An Analysis of Data on Rape and Sexual Assault*

# Sex Offenses and Offenders

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BJS Statistician

### *Measuring the extent of sex offending*

#### *The reports from victims*

In 1995 persons age 12 or older reported experiencing an estimated 260,300 attempted or completed rapes and nearly 95,000 threatened or completed sexual assaults other than rape.

◦ The number reported by victims age 12 or older in 1995 declined significantly from 1993:

1993 — 1 violent sex offense for every 435 residents

1995 — 1 violent sex offense for every 625 residents.

◦ In 1994 and 1995 a third of the victims said that the rape/sexual assault victimization was reported to a law enforcement agency.

#### *The law enforcement response*

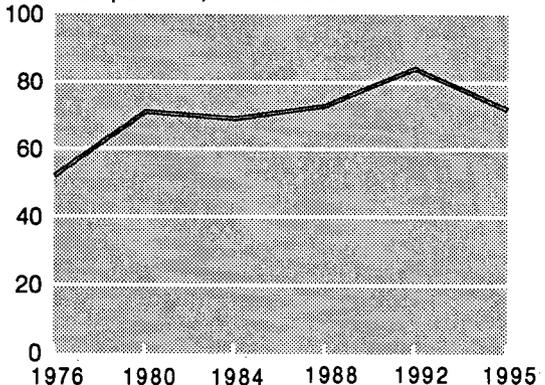
In 1995 the number of forcible rapes reported to the police nationwide was 97,460, the lowest total since 1989.

◦ The highest rate of forcible rape recorded by law enforcement agencies since 1976 was in 1992 — 84 per 100,000 women, or about 1 forcible rape for every 1,200 women. By 1995 the rate had decreased over 14%.

**Rate of forcible rape recorded by law enforcement agencies, 1976-95**

Number of forcible rapes of female victims per 100,000 females in the population

Number per 100,000 females



◦ In 1995 law enforcement agencies reported that about half of all reported forcible rapes were cleared by an arrest — an estimated 34,650 arrests for forcible rape. There were 94,500 arrests for other sex offenses.

The per capita rate of arrest for forcible rape or sexual assault in 1995, 50.3 per 100,000 residents, was the same as that in 1983.

*Federal statistical series obtaining data on arrested or convicted persons — Uniform Crime Reports, National Judicial Reporting Program, and National Corrections Reporting Program — show a remarkable similarity in the characteristics of those categorized as rapists: 99 in 100 are male, 6 in 10 are white, and the average age is the early thirties.*

## Pretrial release and adjudication of rape offenders

About half of rape defendants are released prior to trial. Among those released, half had to post a financial bond. The median bond amount was \$23,500.

- About 1 in 20 filings for a violent felony in the 75 largest counties in 1992 were for rape.
- In 1992 an estimated 21,655 felony defendants nationwide were convicted of rape; 8 in 10 had pleaded guilty.
- Over two-thirds of convicted rape defendants received a prison sentence.
- For rape defendants sentenced to prison, the average term imposed was just under 14 years. About 2% of convicted rapists received life sentences.

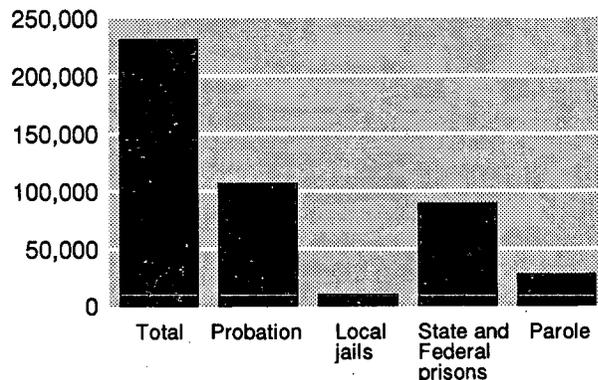
## Corrections and the convicted sex offender

On a given day about 234,000 offenders convicted of rape or sexual assault are under the care, custody, or control of corrections agencies. About 60% of these sex offenders are under conditional supervision in the community.

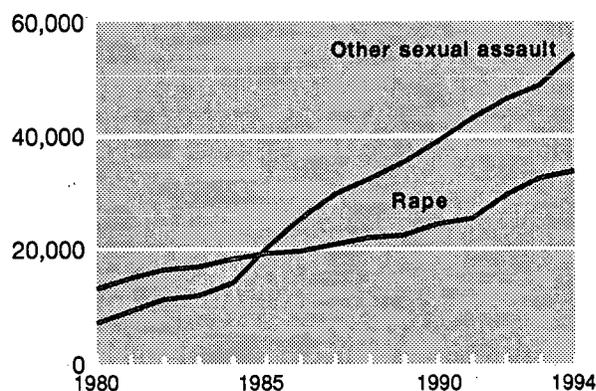
Rape and sexual assault offenders account for just under 5% of the total correctional population in the United States:

- Among 906,000 offenders confined in State prisons in 1994, 88,000, or 9.7%, were violent sex offenders.
- Since 1980 the average annual growth in the number of prisoners has been about 7.6%. The number of prisoners sentenced for violent sexual assault other than rape increased by an annual average of nearly 15% — faster than any other category of violent crime and faster than all other categories except drug trafficking.
- While the average sentence of convicted rapists released from State prisons has remained stable at about 10 years, the average time served has increased from about 3½ years to about 5 years; for those released after serving time for sexual assault, the sentence has been a stable 6½ years, and the average time served grew about 6 months to just under 3 years.

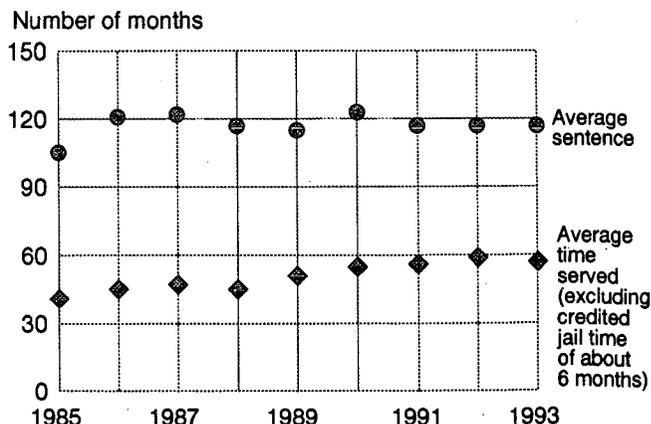
About 234,000 convicted sex offenders are under the care, custody, or control of corrections agencies on an average day. Nearly 60% are under conditional supervision in the community.



Estimated number of rape and sexual assault offenders in State correctional institutions, 1980-94



Average prison sentence received for rape and time served in State prison prior to first release, 1985-93



The averages are for prisoners released for the first time on a sentence.

- Rapists and sexual assaulters serving time in State prisons were less likely to have had a prior conviction history or a history of violence than other incarcerated violent offenders, though they were substantially more likely to have had a history of convictions for violent sex offenses.

- Sexual assault offenders were substantially more likely than any other category of offenders to report having experienced physical or sexual abuse while growing up.

- Violent sex offenders were substantially less likely than other violent offenders to have committed their crime with a weapon; however, rapists were about as likely as all violent offenders to report having used a knife.

- In two 3-year BJS followups of samples of felons placed on probation and of felons released from prison, rapists had a lower rate of rearrest for a new violent felony than most other categories of offenders convicted of violence. Yet, rapists were more likely than others to be re-arrested for a new rape.

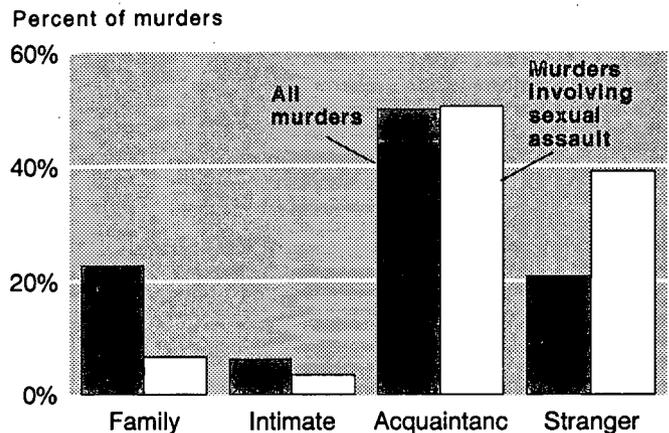
**Sex offenses and murder**

After the latter half of the 1980's, the percentage of all murders with known circumstances in which investigators identified rape or another sex offense as the principal circumstance of the murder has declined from about 2% of murders to less than 1%.

- Between 1976 and 1994 there were an estimated 405,089 murders in the United States. Of these, the circumstances surrounding the murder are known in 317,925, or 78.5%. Among the cases with known circumstances, an estimated 4,807, or 1.5%, were classified as involving rape or another sex offense.

- Offenders in sexual assault murders are about 6 years younger on average than other murderers. Youth under 18 have accounted for about 10% of the sexual assault murders since 1976.

**Victim-offender relationship in murders involving sexual assault and in all murders, 1976-94**



The victim-offender relationship was known for 273,958 of the 405,089 murders between 1976 and 1994 and for 3,154 of the 4,807 murders involving sexual assault.

**Characteristics of known offenders in murders involving sexual assault, 1976-94**

Offender characteristic	Murders	
	All	Sexual assault
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	86.6%	95.0%
Female	13.4	5.0
<b>Race</b>		
White	47.8%	58.0%
Black	50.3	39.9
Other	1.9	2.1
<b>Age</b>		
12 or younger	.2%	.1%
13-17	8.1	9.9
18-24	30.1	39.1
25-29	18.0	22.5
30-39	23.1	21.1
40-49	11.1	5.4
50-59	5.4	1.5
60 or older	3.9	.4
<b>Average</b>	<b>31 yrs</b>	<b>26 yrs</b>

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