

Childhood Sexual Assault Victimization in Virginia

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Executive Summary

In 2002, the Center for Injury & Violence Prevention at the Virginia Department of Health undertook a comprehensive survey regarding sexual assault in Virginia of 1,769 women and 705 men ages 18 and older. The results of this study were produced in April 2003 as a report titled *Prevalence of Sexual Assault in Virginia*. One of the key findings of the study was that of those victims of sexual assault, 78% of females and 94% of males experienced their first victimization as a child¹. These findings have prompted further analysis of those who were first victimized as children.

This report analyzes the data of those respondents victimized as children with a change in definition for the two non-forced sexual victimization categories from a 5 year age difference in the previous report to a 3 year age difference in this data analysis to more closely align with Virginia law. 481 females and 142 males were identified as being a victim of childhood sexual assault.

The key findings of this study are as follows:

- Twenty-five percent of those surveyed were sexually victimized as children; for women, the figure was 27% and for men, 20%.
- Over half of women experienced sexual assault before the age of 13, as did 39% of men.
- Almost half (43%) of the perpetrators were identified as family members.
- Only 10% of perpetrators were strangers.
- Seventy-one percent of assaults against children were perpetrated by adults.
- Most (89%) of the perpetrators of sexual assault were male.
- Female victims were much more likely to have been victimized by rape or attempted rape than male victims.
- Most of the males experience victimization as an adolescent.
- Male victims experienced higher levels than females of non-forcible child rape and non-forcible child molestation in the teenage years.
- Very few male or female victims received medical or mental health care for their sexual victimization.
- Very few victims received any type of law enforcement or legal services/advocacy for their sexual victimization.
- For female and male victims, almost one-third of perpetrators were themselves minors.
- Only 33% of victims spoke with a counselor about their victimization at any time after the event.
- Of the males and females reporting having non-forced sexual intercourse, 100% of those 12 and under, 85% of those age 13 and 14 and 83% of those age 15-17 would be classified as victims according to Virginia law.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Table of Contents	2
Table of Figures	2
Introduction.....	3
Methods.....	3
Sampling	3
Survey instrument	4
Definitions.....	5
Findings.....	6
Demographic characteristics of victims.....	6
Type of sexual assault.....	6
Age at time of victims’ worst sexual assault as children	8
Weapons and threats during the worst childhood sexual assault.....	9
Medical and mental health care for worst childhood sexual assault.....	9
Police contact regarding the worst childhood sexual assault.....	10
Characteristics of perpetrators	10
Perpetrators who were children	11
Non-forcible child rape	12
Non-forcible child molestation	13
Adult sex with minors.....	14
Recommendations.....	15
References.....	17

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Total sexual assault victims by gender and age.....	7
Table 1. Type of childhood sexual assault by gender and age of victim	8
Table 2. Age at time of worst childhood sexual assault, by gender.....	9
Figure 2. Percentage of victims who spoke with someone about their worst childhood sexual assault, by type of person.....	9
Figure 3. Victim’s relationship to perpetrator for the worst childhood sexual assault	10
Table 3. Perpetrator and victim genders of the worst childhood sexual assault.....	11
Table 4. Age of perpetrators of worst childhood sexual assault, by gender of victims	11
Table 5. Number and percentage of victims who were victimized by child perpetrators of specified age groups, by gender and age of victim	12
Table 6. Number and percentage of those reporting non-forced sexual intercourse who were victims of non-forcible child rape, by age and gender.....	13
Table 7. Number and percent of those reporting non-forced touching who were victims of non-forcible child molestation, by age and gender	13
Table 8. Number and percentage of victims of “causing or encouraging the delinquency of a minor” who were victimized by perpetrators of specified age groups, by gender and age of victim.....	14

Introduction

In 2002, the Center for Injury & Violence Prevention at the Virginia Department of Health undertook a comprehensive survey regarding sexual assault in Virginia. The results of this study were produced in April 2003 as a report titled *Prevalence of Sexual Assault in Virginia*. One of the key findings of the study was that 28% of women were victims of sexual assault, of those, 78% were first assaulted under the age of 17; and of the 13% of males who were victims, 94% were first assaulted under the age of 17¹. These findings have prompted a further analysis of those who were first victimized as children.

Sexual assault is a major public health problem in the United States. This is particularly true for children. In a national study, of the 18% of all women who reported being raped at some time in their lives, 22% were under 12 years old and 32% were 12 to 17 years old when they were first raped². One in four girls and one in eight boys are sexually assaulted before age 18³. In a 12-state study of child sexual assault using data collected from 1991-1996, male children comprised 18% of sexual assault victims, compared with 4% of adult victims. This study also found that age 4 is the year of greatest risk of sexual assault for male victims, compared with age 14 for female victims⁴.

Nationally, approximately 10% of children reported to be victims of child abuse and neglect in 2001 were victims of sexual assault⁵. In 2002 in the U.S., youths between the ages of 16 and 19 were victims of rape and sexual assault more often than other age groups, at a rate of 5.5 victimizations per 1,000 people. For children age 12 to 15, the rate of sexual victimization was 2.1 per 1,000⁶. Five percent of all middle schools and 8 percent of all U.S. high schools reported at least one crime of rape or sexual battery to law enforcement in the 1996-1997 school year⁷.

Some of the longer-term implications of childhood sexual abuse have been identified, including greater risk of pregnancy before the age of 18, of engaging in prostitution, and of contracting HIV and other infections⁸; an increased lifetime risk of mental illness, sexual dysfunction, homelessness, alcohol and drug abuse; and an increased lifetime risk of a variety of physical ailments and conditions⁹.

Methods

This report examined the data previously collected and summarized in the 2003 report, *Prevalence of Sexual Assault in Virginia*. As noted in that report, data were collected through a telephone survey conducted from November 2002 through February 2003. A total of 1,769 women and 705 men were randomly selected and surveyed across the state.

Sampling

Two independent samples were drawn to represent the female and male populations of Virginia. The sample was drawn from banks of 100 consecutive phone numbers in Virginia with at least one known listed phone number. Telephone numbers were called up to 15 times at varying times of day on varying days of the week to reach eligible survey participants. Respondents were selected at random from households with an adult female or male by asking for an eligible adult who most recently had a birthday. This method is frequently used to approximate more elaborate, time-consuming random selection tables.

Because of the sensitive nature of the study, only experienced interviewers were selected to conduct the survey. Interviewers were given intensive training on subject-specific interviewing techniques and how to handle victims in emotional distress. Female interviewers interviewed all female respondents. However, respondents were offered a choice of a male interviewer and were told they could switch the gender of the interviewer at any point during the survey. To enhance the likelihood of participation, a toll-free number was provided to allow respondents to call back at a more convenient time. In addition, initial refusals were re-contacted for a “refusal conversion” unless the initial refusal included a request not to be called again. Despite these efforts, only 35.8 percent of females and 21 percent of males contacted responded to the survey.

Survey instrument

The survey instrument for this study was adopted from a survey completed in Washington state and two national studies: the National Women’s Study (NWS) and the National Violence Against Women Survey (NVAWS). Before the initiation of the survey, survey instruments and methodologies were reviewed and approved by the Virginia Commonwealth University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Unlike the two national surveys and the Washington survey, this study used detailed clarification and precise words to inform prospective participants of the potential risks and benefits of the study. A copy of the questionnaire and instructions can be obtained from the Virginia Department of Health, Center for Injury & Violence Prevention.

Survey respondents were asked about their history of sexual assault, the type of assault, characteristics of the perpetrator, consequences of the assault, help-seeking behaviors, lifetime experiences of other traumatic events, perception of personal safety, availability of services and perceptions of community responses to sexual assault.

To build rapport and enhance reliability, the survey instrument was structured to begin with general questions about personal safety and non-sexual victimization. Once a relationship was built through these first questions, respondents were asked more sensitive questions about sexual victimization. Prior to querying respondents about sexual assault, respondents were informed of the sensitive nature of the questions and were provided the toll-free Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault hotline number (1-800-838-8238) for help. Respondents were then asked sexual assault screening questions to determine the occurrence of sexual assault. These screening questions identified if respondents were forced to have vaginal sex, oral sex, anal sex, forced sex with objects, attempted rape and sex when the person was unable to give consent due to heavy alcohol consumption or being under the influence of illicit drug(s). If a person had experienced any of the above, he or she was asked for his or her age when the event occurred and if the event happened in the past year. The interviewer asked for the age of the perpetrator if the respondent reported being sexually assaulted as a child. The interviewer asked more detailed questions to identify the worst, first and past year sexual assault experiences.

Determination of the prevalence of sexual assault was done based on the screening questions listed below. If a person said “yes” to any of the screening questions, including events that took place when the survey participant was a child, then the person was defined to have been a victim of sexual assault. To better understand the prevalence of sexual victimization, sexual assault was classified as rape, attempted rape, inappropriate touch of the breast, buttock and/or genitalia, inability to consent, non-forcible child rape and child molestation.

Definitions

The definition of rape was adopted from the National Violence Against Women Survey, which defines rape as an event that occurred without the victim's consent that involved use of threat of force to penetrate the victim's vagina or anus using tongue, penis, fingers or objects, or penetration of the victim's mouth by penis. Four questions were used to determine the occurrence of rape:

- *Regardless of how long ago it happened or who did it, has a woman or girl, man or boy ever made you have sex by using force or threatening to harm you or someone close to you?*
- *Has anyone EVER made you have oral sex by using force or threat of harm?*
- *Has anyone EVER made you have anal sex by using force or threat of harm?*
- *Has anyone, male or female, EVER put fingers or objects in your anus/vagina against your will by using force or threat of harm?*

Attempted rape was defined if a participant responded "yes" to the following questions:

- *Has anyone, male or female, EVER **attempted** to make you have vaginal, anal oral or anal sex against your will, but intercourse or penetration did not occur?*

Inappropriate touch was determined based on the following question:

- *Has anyone EVER touched your (breasts), buttocks or genital area by using force or threatening to hurt you or someone close to you?*

Unable to consent due to alcohol or drug use was defined based on the following question:

- *Has anyone EVER made you have any kind of sexual intercourse when you had too much alcohol to drink or had taken drugs and could not agree to have sex or say no to having sex?*

Non-forcible child rape was defined based on a "yes" to the following question combined with a perpetrator who was at least three years older than the victim.

- *When you were a child, by this we mean 17 years old or less, did anyone **older** than you EVER have any kind of sexual intercourse with you **WITHOUT** using force or threatening to harm you or someone else?*

Non-forcible child molestation was defined based on a "yes" to the following question combined with a perpetrator who was at least three years older than the victim.

- *When you were a child, by this we mean 17 years old or less, did anyone older than you ever touch your (breasts), buttocks or genital area **WITHOUT** using force or threatening to harm you or someone close to you?*

These latter two definitions of non-forcible child rape and non-forcible child molestation are different from the definitions used in *Prevalence of Sexual Assault in Virginia*. For the previous report, a five-year age difference between perpetrator and victim was used to determine non-forcible child rape and non-forcible child molestation. This was done to allow comparison with other states' data. However, in Virginia, one of the sexual offenses that would be included in this definition of "non-forcible child rape" is defined as a more severe crime if the victim is at least three years younger than a perpetrator (Code of Virginia §18.2-63). Consistency with Virginia law provides a more accurate picture of the prevalence of child sexual assault in

Virginia. Therefore, for this report, the data were re-analyzed looking at a three-year age difference between victim and perpetrator.

The change in definition of non-forcible child rape clearly aligns with Virginia's law. Regarding "non-forcible child molestation" as defined in this report, there is no law in Virginia against non-forcible sexual acts when the child is at least 14 years old and there is no reference in law to age differences unless the perpetrator is in a custodial relationship, which cannot be adequately addressed with this data. Setting the same age difference between victim and perpetrator to define non-forcible child molestation, as is done for non-forcible child rape, provides greater accuracy and consistency across these data.

One result of these changed definitions is an increase in the total number of men and women who were defined as being sexually victimized as children. In *Prevalence of Sexual Assault in Virginia*, a total of 580 people (489 women and 91 men) reported being sexually victimized at some time in their lives, of whom 378 women and 85 men reported being victimized as children. In this study, a total of 623 people (481 women and 142 men) were defined as being victimized sexually as children. By changing the definitions of non-forcible child rape and molestation from a five-year difference to a three-year difference, 6% (103/1,769) of women surveyed and 8% (57/705) of men surveyed were additionally counted as child victims.

Findings

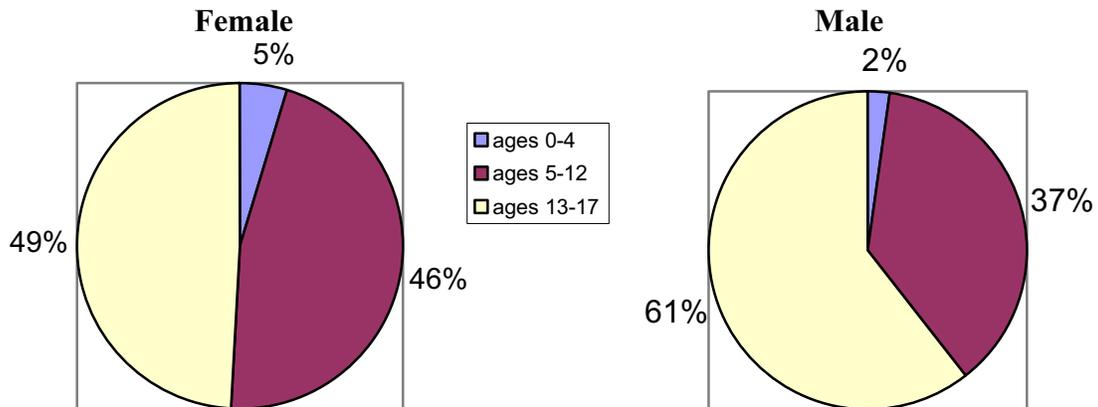
Demographic characteristics of victims

Total survey participants included 2,474 people – 1,769 women and 705 men between the ages of 18 and 92 years. Of these, 25%, or 623 men and women, were first sexually victimized as children, at age 17 or less. This represents 27% (481) of the women surveyed and 20% (142) of the men. Racial categories of the victims were given as follows: 468 (75%) were white, 89 (14%) were African-American, 7 (1%) were Native American, 3 each (<1%) each were Asian-American or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 40 (6%) reported their race as "other" and 13 (2%) did not know or did not answer. Twenty-two (3%) of those first victimized as children were of Hispanic origin.

Type of sexual assault

Figure 1 illustrates all of the child victim of sexual assault (including rape, attempted rape, inappropriate touch, unable to consent, non-forcible child molestation and non-forcible child rape) broken down into three age categories. Females experienced sexual victimization at earlier ages than males. Over half (51%) of females were victimized before the age of 13, whereas only 39% of males were victimized before the age of 13. Most (61%) of the males experienced victimization as an adolescent.

Figure 1. Total sexual assault victims by gender and age



As illustrated in Table 1, The highest number of sexual assaults experienced in childhood was rape (68% of female child victims and 28% of male child victims), non-forcible child rape (40% of female child victims and 53% of male child victims) and non-forcible child molestation (70% of female child victims and 68% of male child victims).

Female participants experienced a higher percentage of rape (68% of females versus 28% of males), attempted rape (22% of females versus 11% of males) and inappropriate touch (31% of females and 9% of males) compared with male victims. Similar percentages of female (8%) and male (7%) victims reported being unable to consent due to alcohol and drugs, with most occurrences reported in the teenage years. Both females (40% for non-forcible child rape and 70% for non-forcible child molestation) and males (53% for non-forcible child rape and 68% for non-forcible child molestation) report high levels of non-forcible child rape and molestation, with male participants reporting the higher levels of each in the teenage years (41% versus 27% for non-forcible child rape and 42% versus 38% for non-forcible child molestation).

Table 1. Type of childhood sexual assault by gender and age of victim

Type of Sexual Assault	Female (481 total)				Male (142 total)			
	Age 0 – 4	Age 5 – 12	Age 13 – 17	Total	Age 0 – 4	Age 5 – 12	Age 13 – 17	Total
Rape	*24 **(5%)	161 (33%)	143 (30%)	328 (68%)	1 (<1%)	16 (11%)	23 (16%)	40 (28%)
Attempted rape	7 (1%)	50 (10%)	48 (10%)	105 (22%)	0 (0%)	6 (4%)	10 (7%)	16 (11%)
Inappropriate touch	3 (<1%)	77 (16%)	68 (14%)	148 (31%)	0 (0%)	5 (3%)	8 (5%)	13 (9%)
Unable to consent	2 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	35 (7%)	38 (8%)	1 (<1%)	1 (<1%)	8 (5%)	10 (7%)
Non-forcible child rape	2 (<1%)	39 (8%)	132 (27%)	173 (40%)	0 (0%)	17 (12%)	58 (41%)	75 (53%)
Non-forcible child molestation	8 (1%)	150 (31%)	181 (38%)	339 (70%)	1 (<1%)	37 (26%)	59 (42%)	97 (68%)

*The total of types of sexual assault for each gender add up to more than the total number of victims in each gender because some victims experienced multiple types of assault across one or more episodes of childhood sexual assault.

**The percentages are of the total number of victims within each gender reporting that type of assault (e.g. the 24 women who reported being raped at age 0-4 are 5% of the 481 women who were victimized as children).

Age at time of victims' worst sexual assault as children

For the following sections, respondents were asked about their first experience of sexual victimization. If the respondent had more than one, the respondents reported on only the worst of the childhood sexual assault events remembered. This information was not requested for every episode of sexual assault that may have taken place before age 18. Therefore, no information on additional victimizations as a child or adult may be reported.

Of those victimized as children, 26 (4%) reported a worst sexual assault at the age of 4 or less, 275 (44%) at age 5 through 12 and 322 (52%) reported their worst childhood sexual assault at age 13 through 17. As can be seen in Table 2 below, there was variation in these proportions by gender, with male victims more likely to be assaulted as teens (61%) than female victims (49%) and female victims more likely to be assaulted at the youngest ages (5% of females versus 2% of males).

Table 2. Age at time of worst childhood sexual assault, by gender

Age at time of first sexual assault	Female	Male	Male and Female Totals
Age birth to 4	23 (5%)	3 (2%)	26 (4%)
Age 5 to 12	222 (46%)	53 (37%)	275 (44%)
Age 13 to 17	236 (49%)	86 (61%)	322 (52%)
Totals	481 (100%)	142 (100%)	623 (100%)

Weapons and threats during the worst childhood sexual assault

When asked if a gun, knife or other weapon was used during the assault, 3% of male and female survey participants who responded said that a knife was used and 96% said that no weapon was used. Twenty-one percent (21%) said that the perpetrator(s) threatened to harm or kill them and 28% believed that someone close to them would be seriously harmed or killed during the assault. Seven percent (7%) said that they were injured during the assault.

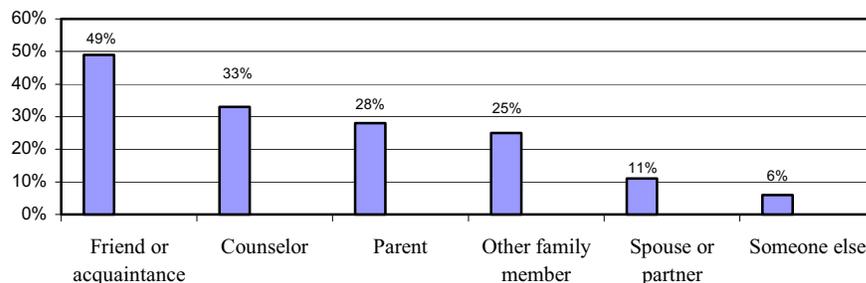
Medical and mental health care for worst childhood sexual assault

Eight percent (8%) went to a doctor or medical center for an examination after this event and 1% reported getting a sexually transmitted disease during this assault. Thirty-seven percent (37%) said that they forgot some or all of what happened during the assault. Eleven percent (11%) said that they forgot some or all of what happened because they had too much alcohol or had taken drugs and could not remember or passed out.

Thirty-three percent of respondents reported that they had talked to a counselor, therapist or other professional about this event. Half of those respondents who reported talking to a counselor received counseling services about this event for over 1 year. Fifty-three percent (53%) of those responding said that they talked to someone other than a counselor about this event. There was no specification in the survey regarding length of time between the assault and talking to someone about it; it could have been at any time afterwards.

As shown in Figure 2 below, 49% spoke with a friend or acquaintance, 28% of victims talked to a parent, 25% talked to another family member, 11% spoke with a spouse or partner, 6% spoke with someone else and 2% spoke with a member of the clergy. Regarding speaking with others, 81% said that it was helpful and 19% said that it was “slightly” or “not at all” helpful.

Figure 2. Percentage of victims who spoke with someone about their worst childhood sexual assault, by type of person



*Total percentages sum to greater than 100% because respondents could give more than one answer

Police contact regarding the worst childhood sexual assault

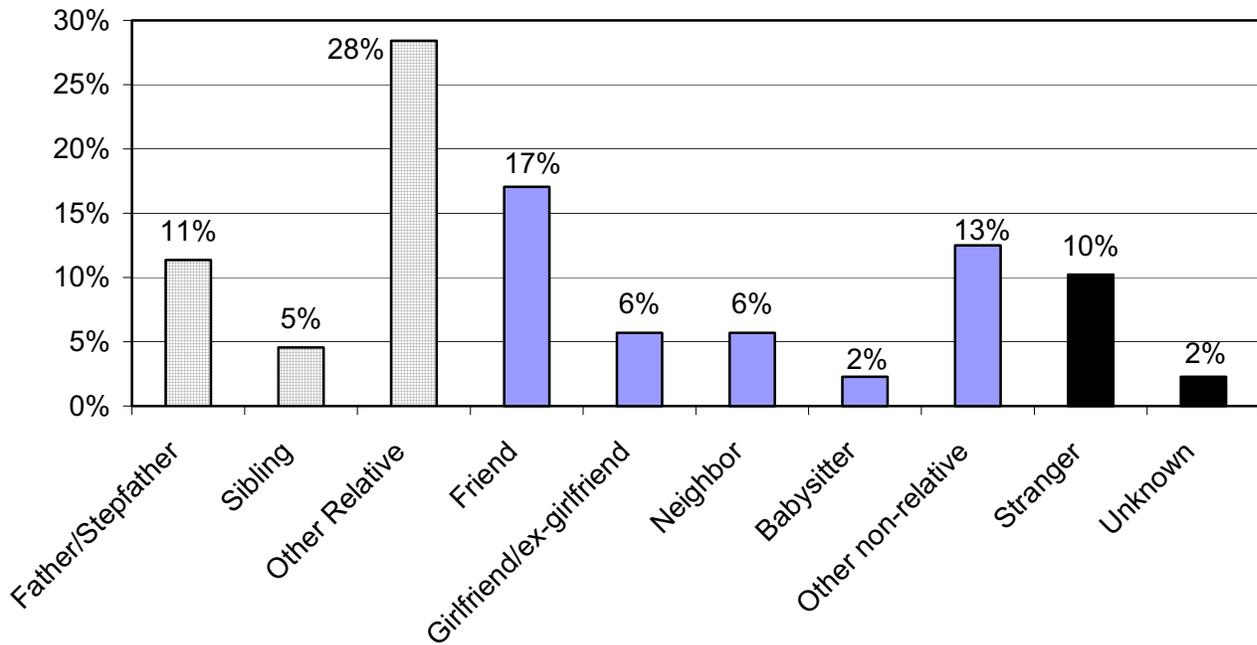
Only 10% of those responding said that this worst episode of childhood sexual assault was reported to the police. Of these, 60% said that the police were “completely”, “very” or “somewhat helpful” and 40% said that the police were “not at all” or didn’t know if it was helpful. Forty percent (40%) of these had a legal advocate or someone who helped them through the legal process. In 70% of these cases where the assault was reported to the police, criminal charges were filed against the perpetrator.

When those who did not report this incident of sexual victimization to the police were asked why they did not, 31% said that they were too young to understand, 13% said that the incident would be too shameful to report, 10% said that they feared the perpetrator, 10% said that it was not a crime or not serious enough to report and 4% said that they wouldn’t be believed.

Characteristics of perpetrators

Regarding the perpetrator’s relationship to the victim as seen in Figure 3, 44% were family members, including 11% who were fathers or stepfathers, 4% were siblings and 28% were relatives other than immediate family members. Seventeen percent (17%) were described as friends, 6% were girlfriends or ex-girlfriends, 6% were neighbors, 2% were babysitters and 24% were others known to the victim. Ten percent (10%) were strangers, while 2% of the respondents didn’t know who was the perpetrator.

Figure 3. Victim’s relationship to perpetrator for the worst childhood sexual assault



For those men and women survey participants who answered regarding perpetrators’ gender, 89% of the perpetrators of the victims’ worst sexual assault as children were men, 10% were women and 1% was both men and women, as some victims had multiple perpetrators for the single incident (Table 3). However, these proportions vary by the gender of the victim: 62% of

male victims had male perpetrators compared with 95% of female victims. Male victims had a much higher percentage of female perpetrators (37%) than did female victims (3%).

Table 3. Perpetrator and victim genders of the worst childhood sexual assault

Perpetrators	Victims		Total
	Female	Male	
Male	292 (95%)	50 (62%)	342 (89%)
Female	10 (3%)	30 (37%)	40 (10%)
Both	4 (2%)	1 (1%)	5 (1%)
Total	306 (100%)	81 (100%)	387 (100%)

Most (29% of females and 32% of males) of the victims' worst childhood sexual assault was perpetrated by a juvenile age 17 or less. As illustrated in Table 4, there were differences in perpetrator age according to the gender of the victim. Men who were first sexually victimized as children were more likely than women to have had a perpetrator in the 18 to 24 age group (30% of males versus 22% of females). Female victims (18%) were more likely than male victims (14%) to have had a perpetrator in the 25 to 34 age group and much more likely than male victims to have had a perpetrator age 55 or over (7% of females versus no males).

Table 4. Age of perpetrators of worst childhood sexual assault, by gender of victims

Age of perpetrator	Victims		
	Female	Male	Male and Female Totals
Age 17 or less	99 (29%)	25 (32%)	124 (29%)
Age 18 to 24	75 (22%)	24 (30%)	99 (24%)
Age 25 to 34	62 (18%)	11 (14%)	73 (17%)
Age 35 to 44	59 (17%)	15 (19%)	74 (18%)
Age 45 to 54	25 (7%)	4 (5%)	29 (7%)
Age 55 or over	22 (7%)	0 (0%)	22 (5%)
Totals	342 (100%)	79 (100%)	421 (100%)

Perpetrators who were children

Of the 623 respondents who reported some type of sexual assault as children, 421 (342 women and 79 men) reported their perpetrator(s)' age. Of these, 99 females (29%) and 25 (32%) males had perpetrators who were also age 17 or under (Table 5). Percentages of perpetrators in each age group were similar for female and male victims. None of the perpetrators were younger than the victims.

Table 5. Number and percentage of victims who were victimized by child perpetrators of specified age groups, by gender and age of victim

Gender and age of victim	Age of perpetrator			Total
	Age 12 or less	Age 13 – 14	Age 15 – 17	
Female (n=99)				
Age 12 or less	16 (24%)	17 (25%)	34 (50%)	67 (100%)
Age 13 – 14	0	3 (25%)	9 (75%)	12 (100%)
Age 15 – 17	0	0	20 (100%)	20 (100%)
Male (n=25)				
Age 12 or less	4 (22%)	5 (28%)	9 (50%)	18 (100%)
Age 13 – 14	0	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	3 (100%)
Age 15 – 17	0	0	4 (100%)	4 (100%)

Non-forcible child rape

As noted above, for the purposes of this study, non-forcible child rape is defined as non-forcible sexual intercourse when the victim is age 17 or under and the perpetrator is at least three years older to more closely align with Virginia law (Code of Virginia §18.2-63). A total of 173 female survey participants and 75 male survey participants reported non-forced sexual intercourse at age 17 or under.

Of these, based on the minimum three-year age difference definition used, 127 (74%) of the female cases could be classified as non-forcible child rape. However, of these 127 cases, 41 (32%) would be considered as rape according to Virginia law, as the survey participants were age 12 or less when the sexual intercourse took place (Code of Virginia §18.2-61).

Of the 75 male survey participants who reported non-forced sexual intercourse, 59 (79%) could be classified as non-forcible child rape, based on the minimum three-year age difference between victim and perpetrator. However, 17 (29%) of the 59 cases would be considered rape, as the victims were age 12 or less.

Table 6 shows the number and percentage, by gender and age, of the cases of non-forcible child rape among those participants reporting non-forced sexual intercourse. Male victims had higher rates of non-forcible child rape at the younger ages than female victims. Eighty-five percent (85%) of 13 and 14 year olds who reported having non-forced sexual intercourse would be classified as victims of carnal knowledge of a minor (Code of Virginia §18.2-63) according to Virginia law. One hundred percent (100%) of males whereas only 77% of females would be classified under the statute.

Table 6. Number and percentage of those reporting non-forced sexual intercourse who were victims of non-forcible child rape, by age and gender

Age of Victims	Number and percent classified as victims of non-forcible child rape	
	Female	Male
Age 12 or less	41 *(100%)	17 *(100%)
Age 13 and 14	17 **(77%)	12 **(100%)
Age 15	26 (81%)	12 (67%)
Age 16	30 (57%)	14 (74%)
Age 17	13 (52%)	4 (44%)
Total	127 (74%)	59 (79%)

*In Virginia, these cases would be classified as rape (Code of Virginia §18.2-61), as those age 12 or under are not considered able to consent to sexual intercourse under any circumstances.

**The percentages are of the total number of victims within each age that would be classified as carnal knowledge of a minor (Code of Virginia §18.2-63) according to Virginia’s laws. (e.g. the 17 women who are classified under non-forcible child rape in this table at age 13 or 14 are 77% of the 22 women who reported non-forcible sexual intercourse at age 13 or 14).

Non-forcible child molestation

As noted above, for the purpose of this study, non-forcible child molestation is defined as non-forced touching of genitalia, breast or buttocks when the victim is age 17 or under and there is at least a three-year age difference between victim and perpetrator. A total of 97 male respondents and 339 female respondents reported non-forced touching. Of these, according to the above definition, 83 (86%) of the men and 267 (79%) of the women would be considered victims of non-forcible child molestation. As seen in Table 7 below, male participants were victims of non-forcible child molestation at rates equal to or higher than female participants in all age categories (86% of males versus 79% of females).

Table 7. Number and percent of those reporting non-forced touching who were victims of non-forcible child molestation, by age and gender

Age of Victims	Number and percent of those classified as victims of non-forcible child molestation	
	Female	Male
Age 12 or less	158 (100%)	38 (100%)
Age 13	*18 (95%)	*13 (100%)
Age 14	19 (70%)	9 (90%)
Age 15	33 (61%)	11 (61%)
Age 16	28 (49%)	9 (64%)
Age 17	11 (46%)	3 (75%)
Total	267 (79%)	83 (86%)

*The percentages are of the total number of victims within each age that were classified as non-forcible child molestation with an age difference of three or more years between the victim and perpetrator (.e.g. the 18 women who are classified under non-forcible child molestation in this table at age 13 are 95% of the 19 women who reported non-forcible touching at age 13).

Adult sex with minors

In Virginia, a particular sexual offense occurs when there is non-forced sexual intercourse between a person who is 15 to 17 years old and someone who is 18 or over, and they are not married (Code of Virginia §18.2-371). Any person 18 years of age or older, who engages in consensual intercourse with a child 15 or older who is not his or her spouse, is “causing or encouraging acts rendering children delinquent”. Eighty-three percent (83%) of males and females reporting having non-forced sexual intercourse would be classified as victims according to Virginia law. As seen in Table 8 below, among female victims the age difference between perpetrator and victim *declined* as the victims got older. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of 15 year old females had perpetrators age 25 or over declined to only 12% of 17 year olds. For male victims the trend was opposite. As male victims became older, the age difference between victim and perpetrator increased. Sixteen percent (16%) of 15 year old males had perpetrators age 25 or over increased to 25% of 17 year olds.

Table 8. Number and percentage of victims of “causing or encouraging the delinquency of a minor” who were victimized by perpetrators of specified age groups, by gender and age of victim

Gender and age of victim	Age of perpetrator			Total percentage
	Age 18 – 19	Age 20 – 24	Age 25 or over	Totals
Female (n = 95)				
Age 15	*9 (35%)	10 (38%)	7 (27%)	26 (100%)
Age 16	25 (55%)	12 (27%)	8 (18%)	45 (100%)
Age 17	11 (46%)	10 (42%)	3 (12%)	24 (100%)
Male (n = 35)				
Age 15	5 (42%)	5 (42%)	2 (16%)	12 (100%)
Age 16	2 (13%)	5 (33%)	8 (53%)	15 (100%)
Age 17	4 (50%)	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	8 (100%)

*The percentages are of the total number of victims within each age that would be classified as victims of “causing or encouraging the delinquency of a minor” (Code of Virginia §18.2-371) according to Virginia’s laws. (e.g. the 9 women who are listed in this table for age 15 are 35% of the 26 women who reported non-forcible sexual intercourse at age 15 with someone over 18).

Recommendations

The Virginia Sexual Violence State Plan Advisory Board is a group of stakeholders around Virginia formed to guide Virginia in its implementation of the Virginia Sexual Violence State Plan developed in 2003. Below are the recommendations related to the findings of this study from the Virginia Sexual Violence State Plan. The complete plan may be viewed online at www.vahealth.org/civp/sexualviolence.

- Public awareness campaigns and public education on recognition of victimization, and responding to and referring victims should be provided in Virginia communities.
- Training on recognizing victimization and responding to and referring victims should be provided to relevant providers (e.g., mental health centers, schools, workplaces, medical and legal community).
- Age-appropriate curriculum on sexual violence prevention should be implemented in kindergarten through undergraduate school across Virginia.
- Virginia should support a Statewide Hotline to provide options for callers who suspect someone of being a perpetrator or for callers who are perpetrators.
- A panel of treatment providers and victims' advocates should audit the current state of sex offender treatment and identify best practices in Virginia.
- A Legislative Commission on Sexual Violence Reduction should be convened to promote public policies on sexual violence prevention strategies and support the needs and rights of sexual violence victims.
- The Commonwealth of Virginia should provide state funding support for sexual violence prevention.

In addition, the Virginia Sexual Violence State Plan Advisory Board recommends the following actions specifically related to the findings of this report:

- Medical and mental health providers serving children should screen all children for sexual violence victimization and refer families to appropriate services.
- Each community should have more services available for child victims of sexual violence and more entry points for children and adolescents to enter a system to receive services.
- Each community should provide specialized advocates for children within the legal system.
- Each community should collaboratively address the issue of child sexual assault by developing collaborative teams to address child sexual assault with local sexual assault centers, departments of mental health and Child Protective Services.
- Juvenile offenders and their families need more access to mental health and treatment services for juvenile offenders, whether or not the juvenile is identified through the court system.
- Each elementary school in Virginia should have access to School Resource Officers who are trained in the issue of sexual violence and positioned in the elementary school.
- Youth need to be taught to redefine sexual assault using the language around emotional manipulation, coercion and unequal relationships.

- Each community should have public awareness events that work to change the norms around older men and women having sex with minors.
- Virginia should implement a statewide survey and or focus groups to assess Virginians knowledge of and comfort-level around the issue of child sexual abuse.
- Virginia should implement the Youth Risk Behavior Survey or a similar annual survey in Virginia to better understand the prevalence of child sexual assault victimization.

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