

ECONOMIC COSTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

INTRODUCTION

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

STATISTICS

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 considered.¹ An estimated \$23 billion of the cost is attributed to lost productivity and almost \$145 billion is because of reduced quality of life.²

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.³

About 12% of total mental health costs is spent on crime victims.⁴

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%.⁵

¹ Miller, Ted, Mark A. Cohen, and Brian Wiersema. 1996. *Victim Costs and Consequences: A New Look*. National Institute of Justice. U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, D.C.

² Miller, Ted R., Mark A. Cohen, and Shelli B. Rossman, Victim Costs of Violent Crime and Resulting Injuries. *Health Affairs* (Winter 1993).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Cohen, Mark; Miller, Ted. The Cost of Mental Health Care for Victims of Crime. (13)(1) *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*: (1998): 93-110.

⁵ Miller, Cohen, et al. Russia and the U.S.: Growing Cooperation? *Great Decisions: 1997*. New York: Foreign Policy Association (1997).

COSTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Rape is the 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.⁶

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:⁷

- 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.

The total cost of sexual assault to victims was \$18 million in 2002.⁸

COSTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In 1988, sexual harassment cost the typical Fortune 500 company \$6.7 million per year, or \$282 per employee.⁹

Over a two-year period, the U.S. government lost more than \$267 million in diminished productivity and turnover due to sexual harassment.¹⁰

90% of Fortune 500 companies surveyed received complaints of sexual harassment. More than 1/3 experienced lawsuits; more than 1/4 had repeated lawsuits.¹¹

⁶ Miller, Cohen, et al. Russia and the U.S.: Growing Cooperation? *Great Decisions: 1997*. New York: Foreign Policy Association (1997).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2002. *National Crime Victimization Survey*. Table 82.

⁹ Klein Associates. 1988. *The 1988 Working Woman Survey Report*.

¹⁰ National Victim Center, 1991.

¹¹ Klein, 1988.

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.¹²

2% of all rapes result in the death of the victim.¹³

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:¹⁴

Total cost other than mental health:		\$ 6,228
Medical	\$1,367	
Emergency services	66	
Productivity	4,683	
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.¹⁵

¹² Tjaden, Patricia, and Nancy Thoennes. *Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. Washington, D.C. (Nov. 1998).

¹³ Groth, Nicholas. *Men Who Rape: The Psychology of the Offender*. New York: Plenum Press, 1979.

¹⁴ Miller, Ted R., Mark A. Cohen, and Shelli B. Rossman, Victim Costs of Violent Crime and Resulting Injuries. *Health Affairs* (Winter 1993).

¹⁵ Tjaden and Thoennes, 1998.

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%).¹⁶

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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸

30% of female stalking victims and 20% of male stalking victims seek psychological counseling following their victimization.¹⁹

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

LOST WORK TIME AND PRODUCTIVITY

Fourteen percent of rape and sexual assault victims lost time from work as a result of their victimization; 28% of them lost 6-10 days.²¹

Each year, victims of intimate partner rape lose an estimated 1.1 million days of activity. Mean daily earnings lost by intimate partner rape victims is \$69.²²

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.²³

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics. *National Crime Victimization Survey*. Washington, D.C.: 1994.

¹⁷ 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.

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

¹⁹ Tjaden, Patricia, and Nancy Thoennes. *Prevalence, Incidence and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. U.S. Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. Washington, D.C. (Nov. 1998).

²⁰ Miller, Ted, Mark A. Cohen, and Brian Wiersema. 1996. *Victim Costs and Consequences: A New Look*. National Institute of Justice. U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, D.C.

²¹ Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2002. *National Crime Victimization Survey*, Tables 87, 89.

²² Centers for Disease Control. 2003. *Cost of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States*.

²³ Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992.

15% of all sexual assault victims incurred a direct economic loss from the crime, mostly due to damage to property.²⁴

²⁴ Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1992.