

Girls and Violence in the United States

Many girls and young women experience or witness violence in their lifetime.

- ◆ In 2005, 899,000 of the estimated 50 million children and youth under age 18 in the United States were reported victims of child maltreatment* (~2%).¹⁹
- ◆ Among the 2% of children that are victims of child maltreatment, girls and boys are about equally likely to be victims of child maltreatment (51% and 47% respectively). For both girls and boys, the likelihood of being maltreated decreases with age, decreasing from 16.5 per 1,000 children ages 3 and under to 6.2 per 1,000 teens ages 16 to 17.¹⁹ (See Figures 1 and 2.)
- ◆ In 2005, about one out of every 30 girls and young women ages 12-15 was a victim of violent crime.¹²
- ◆ In 2007, 27% of young women in grades 9-12 reported being in a physical fight at least once in the previous 12 months. Black (39%) and Latina (34%) young women were more likely than White (22%) young women to report being in a physical fight.²
- ◆ The violence-related nonfatal injury[¶] rate and the violence-related injury death rate for 15-19 year old young women (1,546 and 7 per 100,000 respectively) were both higher than those for 10-14 year old girls (594 and 2 per 100,000 respectively).¹

Girls and young women are exposed to violence in many ways.

- ◆ Girls who are victims of abuse are likely to be victimized in their homes by someone they know. In a national survey, 54% of victims of abuse reported that the perpetrator was a family member.⁶

*Child maltreatment can be defined as behavior towards a child which is outside the norms of conduct and entails substantial risk of causing physical or emotional harm. Four types of maltreatment are generally recognized, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and emotional maltreatment.

¶ Nonfatal injuries are defined as bodily harm resulting from acute exposure to an external force or substance. These statistics include, for example, gunshot wounds, falls, vehicle crashes, fire, electric shock, chemical burns, radiation, and near drowning.

Figure 1: Child abuse and neglect victims, by type(s) of maltreatment, 2005.¹⁹

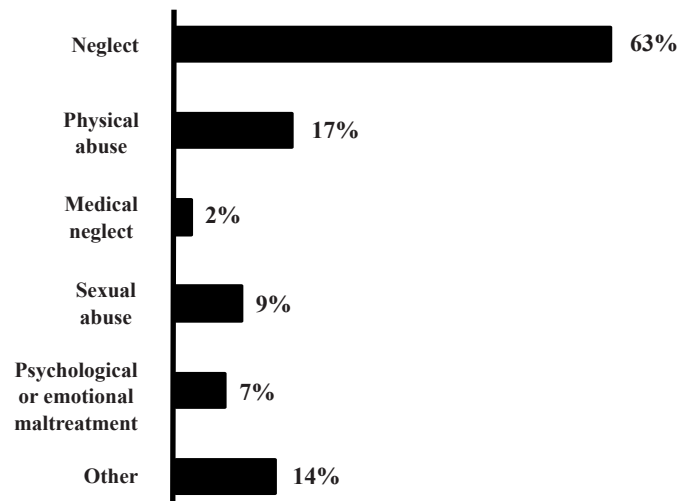
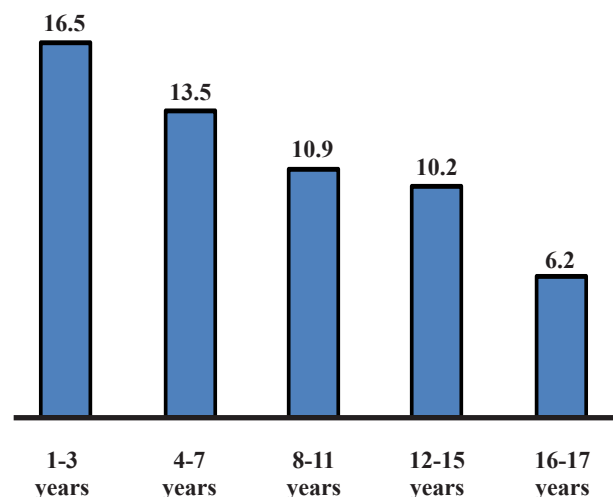


Figure 2: Child victimization rates per 1,000 children, by age group, 2005.¹⁹



Violence in many ways - continued...

- ◆ A 2007 nationally representative survey found that 9% of all high school young women reported being victims of physical dating violence within the 12 months preceding the survey. Seven percent of White and 10% of Latina high school young women reported physical dating violence, compared to 13% of Black young women. The reported frequencies for dating violence against young women ranged from 7% in Vermont to 16% in Georgia.² (See Figure 3.)
- ◆ In 2007, young women in grades 9-12 were more likely to report ever having been physically forced to have sexual intercourse than were young men (11% and 5% respectively). Black (13%) young women were slightly more likely than White (11%) and Latina (11%) young women to report forced sexual intercourse.² (See Figure 3.)
- ◆ According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, fewer than half (48%) of all rapes and sexual assaults are reported to legal authorities.¹⁵
- ◆ Girls and young women who report having been raped or sexually assaulted are four times as likely as girls and young women who do not report these types of abuse to report post-traumatic stress disorder (30% vs. 7%), five times as likely to report depression and substance use (28% vs. 5%), and four times as likely to report delinquent behavior (20% vs. 5%).⁹ (See Figure 4.)
- ◆ The vast majority of rapes and sexual assaults of girls age 12-15 (87%) and young women ages 16-19 (85%) are committed by people they know.¹²

School Violence:

- ◆ Among young women in grades 9-12, 9% reported having been in a physical fight on school property at least once in the previous 12 months. Some 15% of Black, 12% of Latina, and 6% of White young women reported being in a physical fight at school that year.² (See Figure 5.)
- ◆ In 2007, 6% of young women in grades 9-12 reported missing at least one day of school during a 30-day period due to safety concerns. Black (6%) and Latina (10%) young women were more likely than White (4%) young women to report missing school due to safety concerns. Although more young men than young women reported experiencing violence at school, young women were as likely as young men to report concern about personal safety.² (See Figure 5.)

Figure 3: Percentage of high school young women who experienced physical dating violence during the previous 12 months, or ever were forced to have sexual intercourse, by race/ethnicity, 2007.²

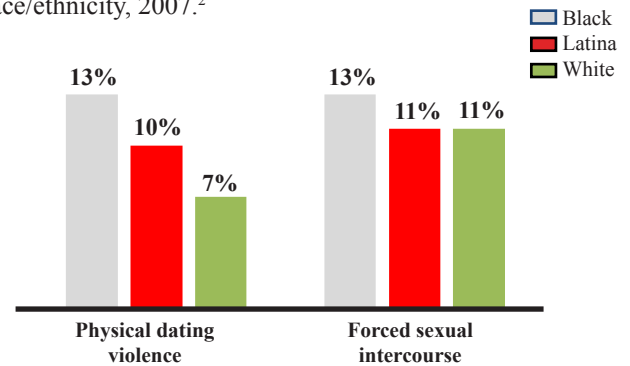


Figure 4: Lifetime percentages of mental health problems and delinquency among young women who have and have not been sexually assaulted, 2003.⁹

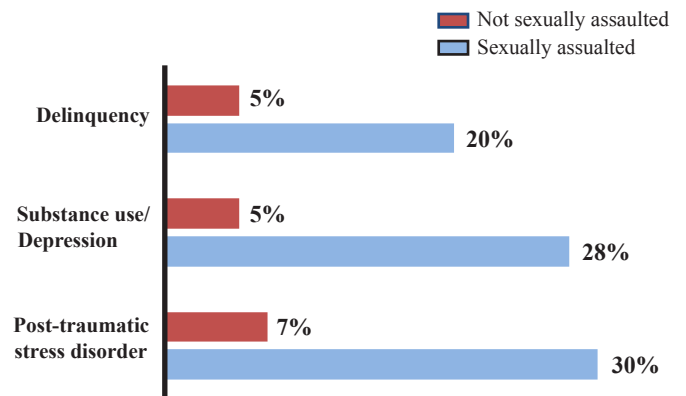
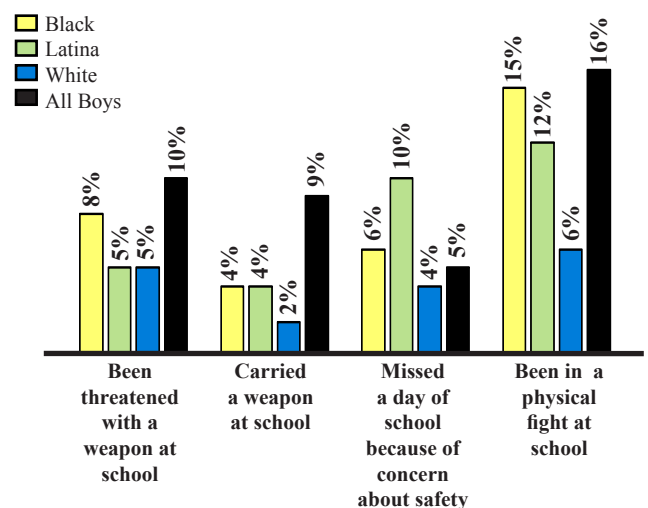


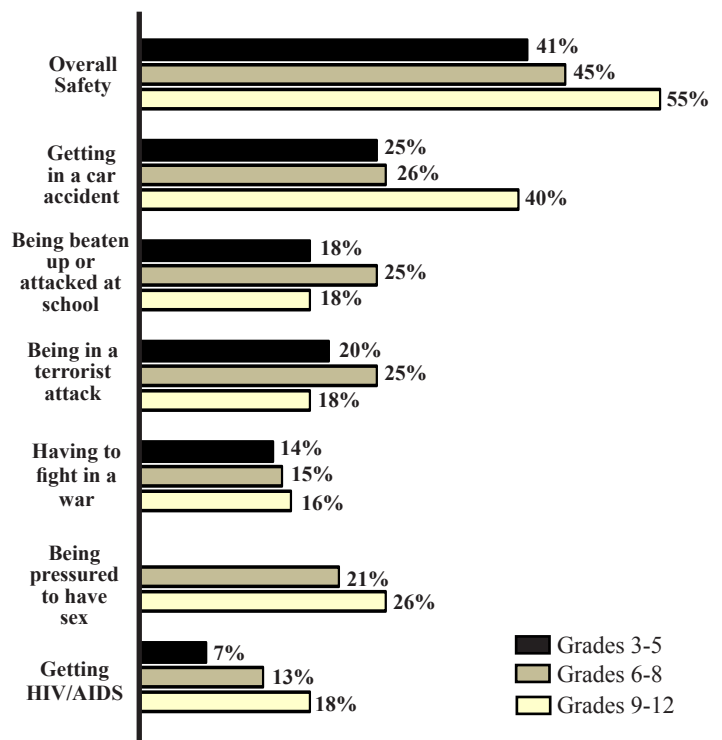
Figure 5: Percentage of high school young women by race/ethnicity, and all young men, who have experienced violence on school property, by type of experience, 2007.²



School Violence - continued

- ◆ A Harris Interactive study examined how girls' worries differ by age. Worries about being beaten up or attacked at school and being in a terrorist attack were prevalent among girls in grades 6-8 (both 25%). Worries about getting in a car accident, being pressured to have sex, and getting HIV/AIDS were prevalent among young women in grades 9 to 12 (40%, 26%, and 18% respectively).⁷ (See Figure 6.)
- ◆ According to a school-based survey, 29% of girls and young women have been the targets of bullying on school property. Among all students who reported being bullied, young women were less likely than young men to report injuries (18% and 31% respectively).³
- ◆ In 2005, students ages 12-18 were victims of about 1.5 million nonfatal crimes at school, including about 868,100 thefts and 628,200 violent crimes (including rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault). These figures represent victimization rates of 33 thefts and 22 violent crimes, including 5 serious violent crimes, per 1,000 students at school in 2005.³
- ◆ Sexual harassment in schools is a concern for many girls and young women. According to a survey conducted in 2000, girls experienced nearly 128,000 incidents of sexual harassment in public schools.¹³

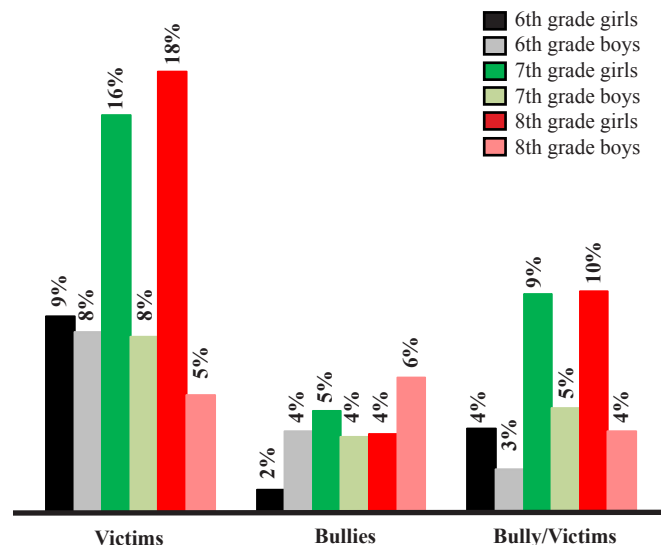
Figure 6: Girls' worries.⁷



Cyber-bullying:

- ◆ According to a 2005 study, 85% of boys and 88% of girls go online, including 82% of 12-14 year olds and 92% of 15-17 year olds.¹¹
- ◆ In a 2007 study of 3,767 students in grades 6-8 attending elementary and middle schools in the southwestern and northwestern United States, 11% said they had been electronically bullied. Girls were overrepresented in the victim and bully/victim categories. Some 15% of girls and 7% of boys said that they were victims of electronic bullying and 10% of girls and 4% of boys said that they were both victims and bullies, while 4% of girls and 5% of boys reported bullying others but not being bullied themselves.¹⁰ (See Figure 7.)
- ◆ A nationally representative study on youth Internet safety revealed that 91% of youths had access to the Internet at home, 90% at school, 69% at a friend's house, and 43% in another location. An overwhelming majority of online victimization occurred at home: 79% of sexual solicitation, 79% of aggressive sexual solicitation, 79% of unwanted exposure to sexual material, and 85% of harassment.²¹

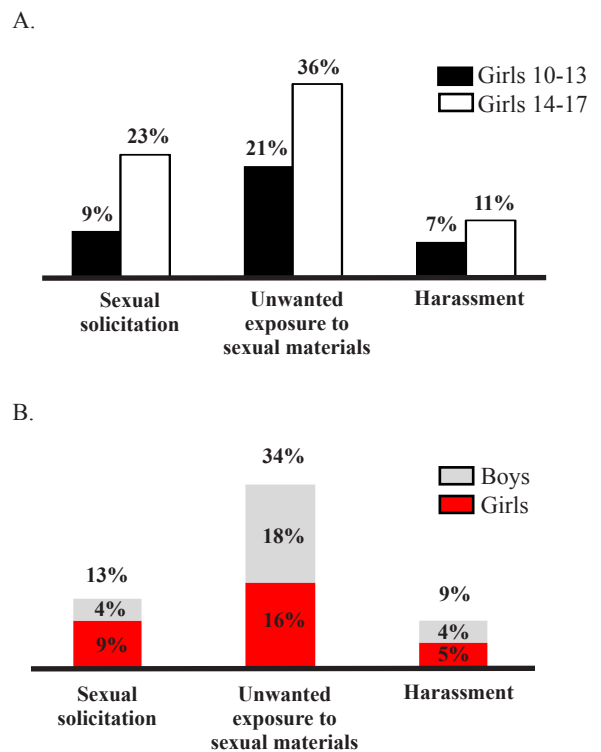
Figure 7: Involvement in electronic bullying (at least once) by grade and gender (note: categories are mutually exclusive).¹⁰



Cyber-bullying - continued

- ◆ In a 2005 survey of victimization of young Internet users, girls ages 14 to 17 were especially likely to report incidents of online sexual solicitation (23%), unwanted exposure to sexual material (36%), and harassment (11%).²¹ (See Figures 8A and 8B.)
- ◆ In a survey of young people ages 10-15 who used the Internet, most (82%, of whom 47% were girls) had little or no experience of Internet harassment or unwanted sexual solicitation. Girls were more than half (52%) of the 14% of respondents who had both perpetrated and been victims of Internet harassment, and girls were 63% of the 3% of respondents who were victims of both Internet harassment and unwanted sexual solicitation. Only 12 respondents (0.9%), of whom 4 were girls, reported being both victims and perpetrators of both Internet harassment and unwanted sexual solicitation.²²

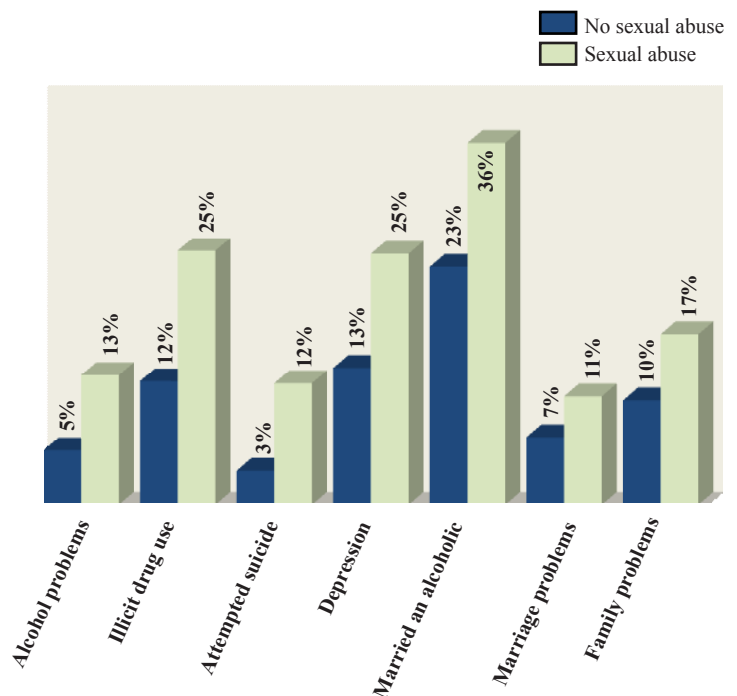
Figure 8: Online victimization of youth who use the Internet, (A) by ages of girls and (B) by sex of victim, 2005.²¹



Girls and young women who witness or experience violence are more likely to become involved in risky behaviors.

- ◆ Exposure to violence in the home doubles the likelihood that girls will become victims of domestic violence, whereas for boys it doubles the likelihood that they will become perpetrators of domestic violence.²⁰
- ◆ A nationally representative study found that girls who witnessed violence were far more likely to experience post-traumatic stress disorder than were girls who had not witnessed violence (20% vs. 4%). Additionally, girls who were witnesses to violence reported higher levels of substance abuse (18% vs. 3%) and delinquency (17% vs. 2%).⁹
- ◆ Women who were sexually abused as children are more than twice as likely as women who had not been sexually abused to report alcohol problems (13% vs. 5%) or illicit drug use (25% vs. 12%), and four times as likely to report attempting suicide (12% vs. 3%).⁴ (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9: Relationship in women between childhood sexual abuse and adult substance use, mental health, and social outcomes.⁴



Girls' exposure to violence often leads to involvement with the juvenile justice system.

- ◆ In 2006 there were about 14.4 million arrests in the United States. Of those arrested, 369,281 (2.5%) were young women.⁵
- ◆ In 2006, there were about 1.6 million people in state or federal prisons; 112,498 of those in prison (about 7%) were female.¹⁶
- ◆ There were 105 young women under the age of 18 in state prisons in 2006.¹⁷
- ◆ Young women represented 29% of all juvenile arrests in 2006. In 2006, arrests of young women accounted for 17% of all juvenile arrests for violent crimes and 33% for property crimes[†]. Of all juvenile arrests, girls and young women accounted for 74% of arrests for prostitution, 56% for runaway, 41% for larceny/theft, and 30% for curfew/loitering arrests.⁵ (See Figure 10.)
- ◆ Between 1997 and 2006, arrests of young women for the following crimes have seen an overall decrease: violent crime (-12%), property crime (-35%), burglary (-31%), larceny/theft (-34%), aggravated assault (-10%) and motor vehicle theft (-49%). However, arrests for the following crimes among young women have seen an increase: prostitution (+48%), carrying or possession of weapons (+5%), drug abuse violations (+2%), DUI (+39%), and disorderly conduct (+33%).⁵ (See Figure 11.)
- ◆ While in custody, young female offenders are more likely than their male peers to be sexually victimized by other detained youth or correctional staff. In state-run juvenile facilities, girls account for 11% of the total population but 34% of the victims in substantiated incidents of sexual violence in those facilities. Girls constitute 17% of the population in local or privately operated juvenile facilities, but girls are 37% of the victims of substantiated incidents of sexual violence.¹⁸
- ◆ According to a 2002 national survey of jail inmates, 36% of female inmates reported they had been sexually abused and 45% had been physically abused in the past. Among the women who knew their abuser, 26% said they had been physically or sexually abused by a parent or guardian, and 34% by a friend or acquaintance.⁸ (See figures 12 and 13).

Figure 10: Juvenile arrests by type of violation and gender, 2006.⁵

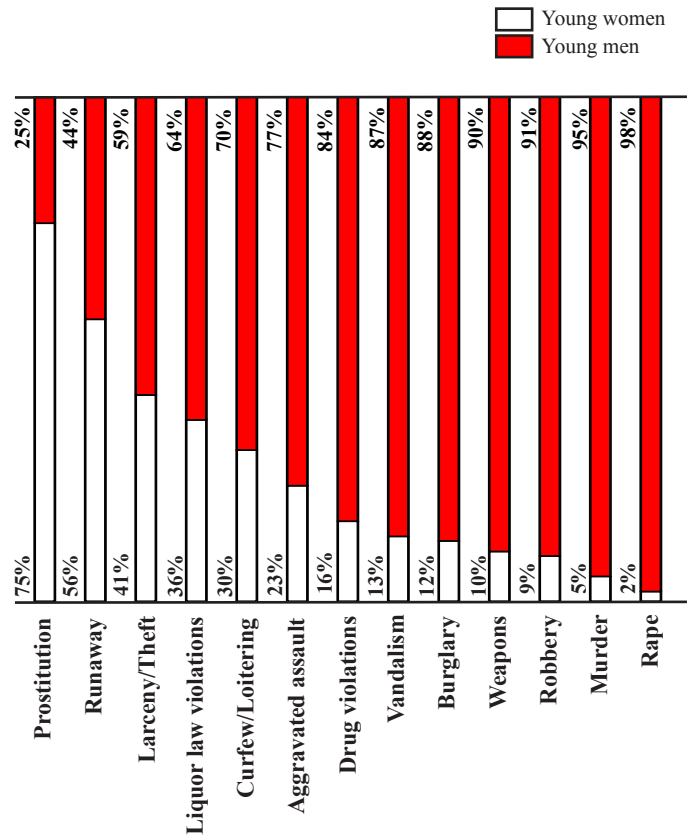
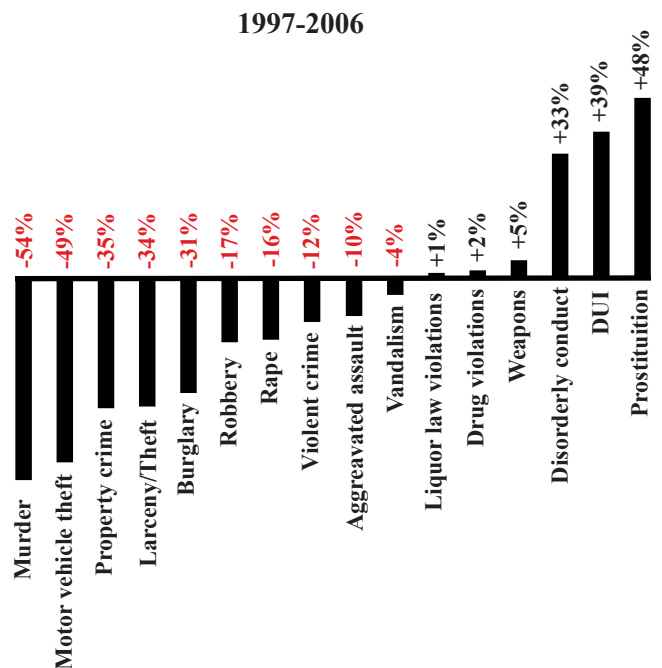


Figure 11: Ten year trends in juvenile female arrests by type of violation.⁵



† Violent crimes include murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes include burglary, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

*Girls' exposure to violence and juvenile justice system
- continued.*

- ◆ Women of color are more likely to be incarcerated than are White women. In 2006, Black women (age 18 and older) were incarcerated at a rate of 148 per 100,000 and Latinas were incarcerated at a rate of 81 per 100,000. The incarceration rate for White women was 48 per 100,000.¹⁶ Across all age groups, Black women were incarcerated at between 2.8 and 4.3 times the rate of White women.¹⁷
- ◆ In 2003, young women accounted for 15% of juvenile offenders in residential placement. Black and American Indian girls and young women were more than twice as likely to be in juvenile custody as girls and young women of other racial/ethnic groups (214 and 209 per 100,000 respectively). Among Latina, White, and Asian young women, 83, 68 and 32 per 100,000 respectively were in juvenile custody.¹⁴

Figure 12: Age of prior physical or sexual abuse of female jail inmates, 2002.⁸

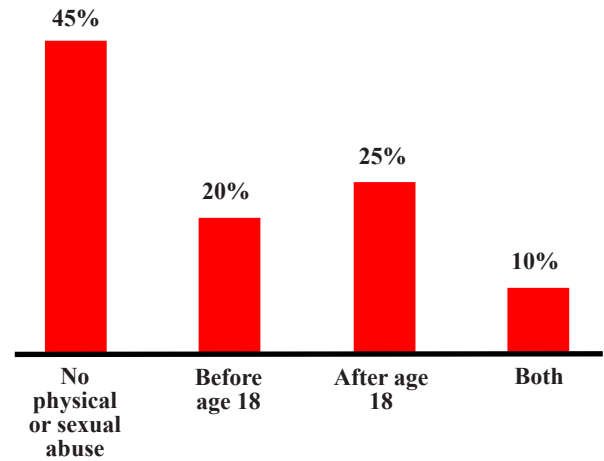
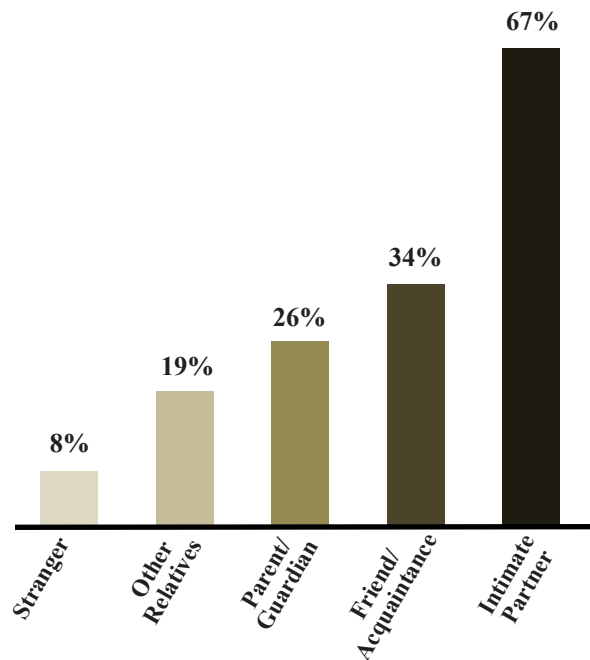


Figure 13: Relationship of abused female inmates to their prior abuser(s).⁸



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For information on girls and other issues, see these Girls Incorporated® Fact Sheets:

- ◆ **Girls and Violence in Canada**
- ◆ **Girls and Juvenile Justice**
- ◆ **Girls and Their Bodies**
- ◆ **Girls and Careers**

Girls Inc. Project BOLD® strengthens girls' abilities to lead safer lives by developing strategies for self-defense, seeking out caring adults to help with personal violence, and advocating on violence issues.

Girls Inc. Media Literacy® encourages girls to think critically about media messages and fosters their awareness of the power of the media and its effect on girls.

Girls Inc. is a nonprofit organization in the United States and Canada that inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and boldSM. With local roots dating to 1864 and national status in the U.S. since 1945, Girls Inc. has responded to the changing needs of girls and their communities through research-based programs and advocacy that empower girls to reach their full potential and to understand, value, and assert their rights.

Girls Inc. programs focus on science, math, and technology, health and sexuality, economic and financial literacy, sports skills, leadership and advocacy, and media literacy for girls ages 6 to 18 throughout the United States and in Canada. While our goal is to reach all girls, we recognize that girls in at-risk communities have an even greater need for our programs. Of those we serve, 70% are girls of color and 66% come from families earning \$25,000 or less; 49% are from single-parent households, most of which are headed by women.

Girls Inc. in 2006 reached nearly 800,000 girls through Girls Inc. affiliates, our website, and educational products. Guided by our vision of empowered girls and an equitable society, Girls Inc. is committed to reaching millions more girls through its programs and public education efforts.

The National Resource Center (NRC) is the organization's research, program development, national services, and training site. Research and evaluation conducted by the NRC provide the foundation for Girls Inc. programs. The NRC also responds to requests for information on girls' issues and distributes Girls Inc. publications.

Girls Inc. informs policy makers about girls' needs locally and nationally. The organization educates the media about critical issues facing girls. In addition, the organization teaches girls how to advocate for themselves and their communities, using their voices to promote positive change.

Girls Inc. leadership focuses on developing innovative ways to leverage our most valuable asset – acknowledged expertise as the nation's premiere program provider and advocate for girls. Our leaders include Janice L. Warne, Chair of the National Board; Joyce M. Roché, President and CEO; and Donna Brace Ogilvie, Distinguished Chair.

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