

# Rape and Sexual Assault in Massachusetts, 2007-2008

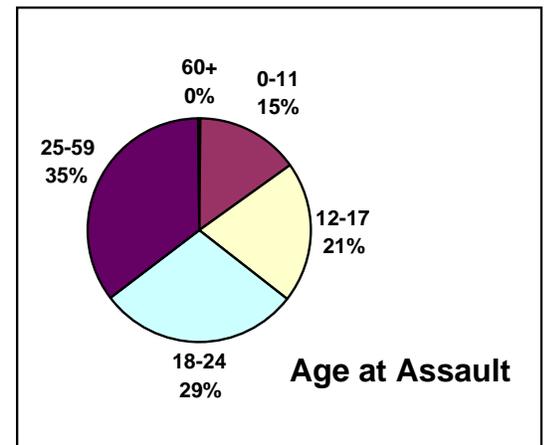
## Incidents Reported by Survivors Who Seek Help from Rape Crisis Programs

In Massachusetts an estimated 13.5% of women and 4.9% of men have experienced sexual assault<sup>‡</sup> in their lifetime.<sup>i</sup> To respond to the needs of survivors of sexual violence and their communities, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) funded 17 local Rape Crisis Centers (RCCs) across Massachusetts, as well as a statewide Spanish language helpline. The information below is a summary of data collected by these programs over a one-year time period.

From July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008, trained rape crisis counselors from MDPH-funded RCCs and the statewide Spanish language helpline **responded to 12,210 hotline calls**; 6,195 of these were from survivors.<sup>ii</sup> In addition to information on the number of hotline calls received, counselors also collect information on incidents of sexual assault that are reported to them during the course of providing services. The primary purpose of hotline counselors is crisis intervention; as such, counselors complete data forms to the best of their ability, but data may be incomplete. The extent of missing data on a particular question is noted in the text. RCCs and the statewide Spanish language helpline received 2,496 unduplicated reports of sexual assault. Of these reports, 1,784 were made directly by survivors. The data presented below detail these reports from survivors only.

### Among the survivors who reported to RCCs and the Spanish language helpline:

- **92% were female**, of 92% who provided information on their gender;
- **Age at the time of assault** ranged from **less than 1 year to 88 years**, among the 61% of callers who provided specific information on their age;<sup>iii</sup>
- Of the 60% of survivors who identified their sexual orientation to RCC staff **89% identified as heterosexual** and **5% identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual**;
- Of the 65% of survivors who identified to RCC staff membership in at least one racial-ethnic group, **63% were White**, **17% were Hispanic/Latino(a)**, **11% were Black**, **2% were Asian**, and 6% identified with one of several other racial-ethnic categories (including multi-racial);
- **Just under a third (30%) reported** having a **disability**, of the 56% who provided information on disability status at the time of the report.



### Circumstances of the assaults:

- **41% of sexual assaults reported occurred at the victim's home**, of the 69% for which information was provided on location of assault. Another **30% occurred in another home or residence**.

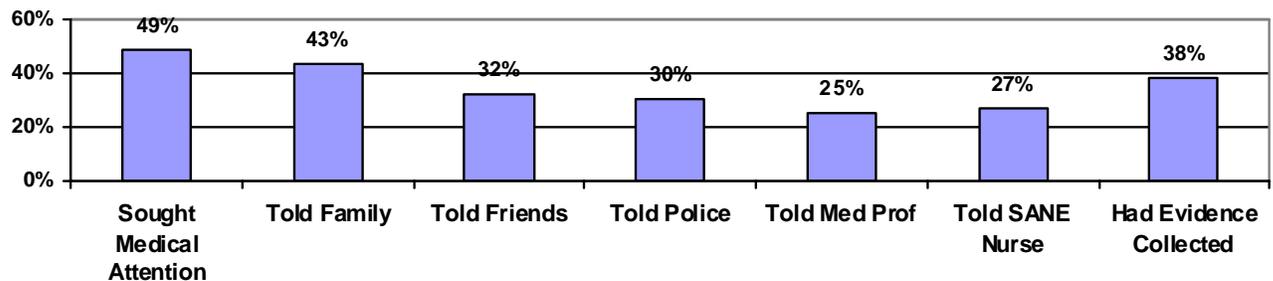
<sup>‡</sup> Lifetime sexual assault is defined as ever having experienced rape, attempted rape, or physical sexual assault. This is not the definition used prior to FY2006 and data may therefore not be comparable.

## Sexual Assault Perpetrators<sup>iv</sup>:

- Of the 82% of assaults about which information was provided on victim-perpetrator relationship, survivors reported that **friends and acquaintances** committed **25%**, followed by **current or ex-spouses, partners, dates, boyfriends, or girlfriends** (24%); **parents, step-parents, siblings, or other relatives** (19%); **strangers** (18%), and; **persons known for less than 24 hours** (5%).
- Based on survivor reports, **younger victims** (<12 years) were most often victimized by **parents/legal guardians** (35%) and **other relatives** (37%). **Adolescent victims** (12-17 years) most often reported the perpetrator as a **friend or acquaintance** (33%), followed by **parents, step-parents, siblings, or other relatives** (26%), **strangers** (18%), and **date/boyfriend/girlfriend/partners** (15%). **Adult victims** (age 18 and over) most commonly identified perpetrators as **current or former partners** (31%), **friends or acquaintances** (27%), and **strangers** (23%).
- **Men committed 95% of reported sexual assaults**, of the 88% of assaults in which information was provided on perpetrator gender. 91% of assaults involved males perpetrating against females, where perpetrator and victim gender were both known (83%).

## Survivors who also sought other help:

- In addition to reporting a rape or sexual assault to one of our Rape Crisis Centers, some survivors had **told family (43%), friends (32%), police (30%), a specially trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE nurse; 27%), and/or other medical professionals (25%).<sup>v</sup>** Information on reporting to others was provided by 87% of survivors.
- **49%** sought **medical attention**, of 79% who provided information on medical attention;
- **38%** had **forensic evidence collected**, of 77% who provided information on evidence collection.



## If you need help please contact your local rape crisis center.

For more information about sexual assault services and a list of MDPH-funded rape crisis centers, please see the Sexual Assault Prevention and Survivor Services website at: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/sexualassaultservices>. For more information about the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program (SANE) please go to: <http://www.mass.gov/dph/sane>.

## Data Collection and Limitations

Data contained in this report are reported to Rape Crisis Centers by survivors. RCC counselors prioritize providing support and information to survivors over data completion which can lead to missing data on survivor demographic characteristics.

<sup>i</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts. A Profile of Health Among Massachusetts Adults, 2007: Results from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Boston, Massachusetts: Health Survey Program, Center for Health Information, Statistics, Research, and Evaluation, Department of Public Health.

<sup>ii</sup> Hotline services are provided for survivors, family and friends, and professionals for support and resource referrals. Survivors may call the Hotline multiple times or may prefer to discuss the assault in face-to-face counseling rather than on the hotline, thus the number of calls to the hotline is a measure of service use and is not a measure of sexual assault incidents reported to DPH-funded RCCs.

<sup>iii</sup> Many survivors do not contact RCCs immediately after they are assaulted but may seek services later in life. Data on age at time of assault is collected in order to illustrate the demographics of victims as accurately as possible.

<sup>iv</sup> Perpetrator characteristics do not fall into mutually exclusive categories because some sexual assaults are committed by multiple people, therefore the percentages will not sum to 100%. The remaining relationship categories not named in this report each accounted for less than 3% of the remaining total number of assaults.

<sup>v</sup> Survivors may engage in a variety of help-seeking efforts involving multiple parties, therefore these categories are not mutually exclusive and would not sum to 100% even if all reporting categories were provided. Provided here are the top five reporting sources as indicated to RCC staff during FY2008.

