



Youth Victims of Sexual Assault

Using Medical Provider Data to Describe the Nature and Context of Sexual Crime Perpetrated on Youth Victims

Deval L. Patrick, Governor
Timothy P. Murray, Lieutenant Governor
Kevin M. Burke, Secretary of Public Safety and Security

Report prepared by:
Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Research and Policy Analysis Division

April 2008

This document was prepared by the Research and Policy Analysis Division in the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security.

Author:
Shelley Penman, Data Coordinator

April 2008

Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security.

If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact:

Keith O'Brien, Director of Research
Research and Policy Analysis Division
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Ten Park Plaza, Suite 3720
Boston, MA 02116
Keith.Obrien@state.ma.us

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| HIGHLIGHTS | 4 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 5 |
| DATA OVERVIEW | 7 |
| VICTIM CHARACTERISTICS | 9 |
| VICTIM GENDER, AGE, AND RACE | 9 |
| ASSAILANT CHARACTERISTICS | 13 |
| NUMBER OF ASSAILANTS | 13 |
| NUMBER OF ASSAILANTS BY VICTIM GENDER | 13 |
| GENDER OF ASSAILANTS | 14 |
| ASSAILANT-VICTIM RELATIONSHIP | 14 |
| VICTIM-ASSAILANT RELATIONSHIP BY AGE | 16 |
| INCIDENT CHARACTERISTICS | 17 |
| ASSAULT SURROUNDINGS | 17 |
| CITY OF ASSAULT | 18 |
| TIME OF ASSAULT | 20 |
| MONTH OF ASSAULT | 20 |
| TYPES OF FORCE USED..... | 21 |
| INJURIES SUSTAINED | 21 |
| REPORTING TO POLICE..... | 22 |
| CHILD ABUSE REPORTS..... | 23 |

Highlights

An analysis was conducted on youth victims (under the age of 18) in the Provider Sexual Crime Report (PSCR) dataset. This report presents findings on the nature and context of sexual assaults committed on youth victims in Massachusetts. The following are highlights of these findings.

- There were 2,063 cases of sexual assault perpetrated on youth victims from January 2000 through December 2006 in the PSCR database.
- The number of PSCR youth sexual assault cases have remained relatively stable over the years and comprise approximately one third of all PSCR cases annually.
- The vast majority of victims were female (94.2%).
- The majority of victims in the dataset were age 12 through 17 (84%) with the most common victim age being 15 years old.
- Victims were most commonly White (60%) followed by Hispanic (19%) and Black (16%).
- Most assaults involved only one assailant (84%) and nearly all assailants were male (99%).
- The majority of assaults were committed by acquaintances (39%) but the victim-assailant relationship varied greatly depending on the age of the victim.
- The majority of sexual assaults occurred in a house or apartment (64%).
- Sexual assaults were widely dispersed throughout the Commonwealth and occurred in 239 different Massachusetts communities.
- There was a slight increase in sexual assaults during the summer months with July being the most common assault month.
- The use of body weight / holding down and verbal threats were the most commonly reported types of force used by the assailant (20% and 18% respectively). The use of knives (3%) and guns (2%) was relatively uncommon.
- Approximately 80% of victims reported the assault to the police.
- 51A child abuse reports were filed in 47% of cases.

Introduction

Sexual assault committed on youth victims is a very serious issue facing society. Because of the sensitive and taboo nature of the offense, it is difficult to collect reliable statistics on the prevalence of youth sexual assault. However, studies show that sexual assault on youth victims is a widespread issue that deserves significant attention. Prevalence of victimization is measured through official police reports as well as victimization surveys. A subset of available research is summarized below.

Analyzing police statistics is one way to measure the prevalence of sexual assault. The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) notes in its publication titled “Crime in the United States, 2006” that 92,455 forcible rapes were reported to the police at a rate of 30.9 crimes per 100,000 residents¹. It should be noted that because these statistics only reflect crimes where the victim reported the offense to the police, they drastically underestimate sexual crime by excluding crimes not reported to the police. Snyder (2000) looked specifically at the prevalence of youth sexual assault documented in police data and found that persons under 18 years of age account for 67% of all sexual assault victimizations reported to law enforcement agencies through the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS) Program. Children under age twelve account for 34% of those cases, and children under age six account for 14% of those cases².

Victimization surveys provide evidence that sexual crime is much more prevalent than police data document. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics’ National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) for 2006 estimated that there were 272,350 cases of rape/sexual assault nationally³. The National Victim Center estimated that nearly 700,000 women are raped each year, and that 61% of the rape victims are under the age of 18⁴. The National Survey of Adolescents, sponsored by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), found that of the 22.3 million adolescents age 12-17 in the United States in 1999, approximately 1.8 million had been victims of a serious sexual assault⁵. The John Hopkins University School of Public Health found that between one-third and two-thirds of known sexual assault victims are age 15 or younger⁶.

Beyond counts of offenses reported to authorities or obtained through victimization surveys, little detail is known about the specific nature and context of sexual assault. For the most part, researchers are limited to statistics that estimate the prevalence or

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2007). *Crime in the United States, 2006*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.

² Snyder, H. (2000). *Sexual Assault of Young Children as Reported to Law Enforcement: Victim, Incident, and Offender Characteristics*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

³ Rand, M., & Catalano, S. (2007). *Criminal Victimization, 2006*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁴ National Center for Victims of Crime & Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center. (1992). *Rape in America: A Report to the Nation*. Arlington, VA: National Center for Victims of Crime.

⁵ Kilpatrick, D.; & Saunders, B. (1997). *The Prevalence and Consequences of Child Victimization*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice.

⁶ Heise, L., Ellsberg, M., & Gottemoeller, M. (1999). *Ending Violence Against Women*. Population Reports, Series L, No. 11. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health.

incidence of sexual assault and rape. Data collected through the Provider Sexual Crime Reports are unique in that they allow analysis of the context and the nature of sexual assaults. Another reason that PSCR data is unique is because of the environment that the information is collected. Individuals disclose the details of their sexual assault to medical professionals but do not necessarily report this crime to the police. The PSCR provides a rare opportunity to look in depth, across several years, at a certain context of sexual assaults in Massachusetts.

The results presented in this report should not be considered a representative sample of sexual assault in Massachusetts, but merely a reflection of the cases in which a victim sought medical attention and a medical professional forwarded the information to the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS). This report does not present information on the incidence or prevalence of sexual victimization in Massachusetts, as the PSCR does not include sexual assaults where the victim did not seek medical attention, regardless of whether they reported the crime to the police.

This report is organized into the following sections: Data Overview, Victim Characteristics, Assailant Characteristics, and Incident Characteristics.

Data Overview

This report analyzes data from the Provider Sexual Crime Report (PSCR). Under Massachusetts law, all medical professionals who examine a victim of sexual assault are required to fill out a PSCR. This PSCR data tracking form was developed by a multidisciplinary committee in 2000. These forms were developed specifically for adolescent and adult victims (age 12 years and over) and were only completed for victims under the age of 12 when a medical professional chose to use an adolescent/adult evidence collection kit on a young child. Therefore, youth victims under the age of 12 will be underrepresented in this report. In 2005 it was decided that PSCR data should be tracked for *all* sexual assaults committed on youth under the age of 12, and a separate form was specially designed for this population (called a Pediatric Provider Sexual Crime Report form). The Pediatric PSCR was specifically designed with more limited data fields to discourage medical professionals from obtaining detailed information about the abuse/assault from a child because this information is best obtained by a specially trained forensic interviewer. The Pediatric PSCR collects data on all youth victims under the age of 12 who are examined by a medical professional (including those who had an evidence collection kit and those that did not). These cases will be excluded from analysis in particular data sections (such as assailant characteristics and certain incident characteristics) as such data is not collected on the Pediatric PSCR.

The analyses presented in this report reflect 2,063 individual cases of sexual assault perpetrated on a youth victim from January 2000 through December 2006 (see Figure 1). Only victims under the age of 18 are included in this analysis. Each case reflects one individual seeking medical treatment for a sexual assault. Of the 2,063 cases detailed in the report, data from 2,006 cases were recorded on the original PSCR form and 57 cases from the Pediatric PSCR form.

Figure 1.

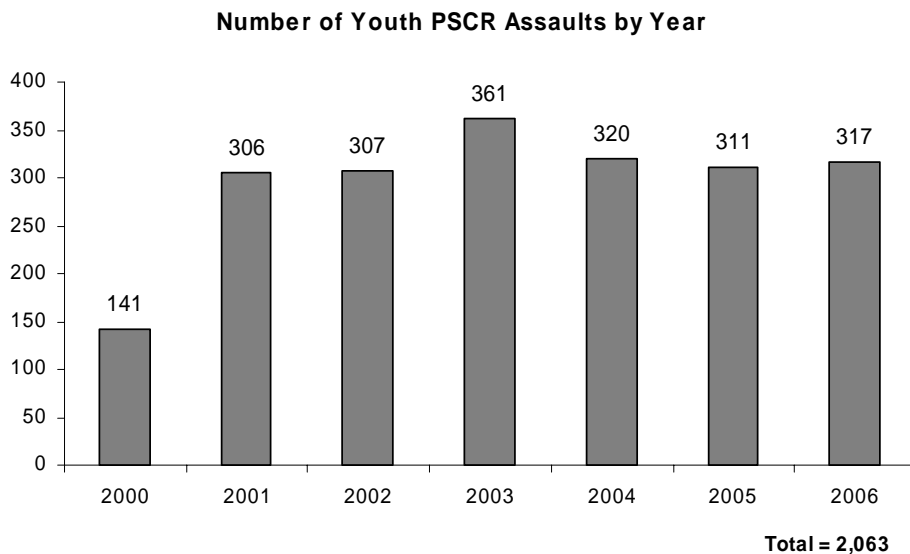
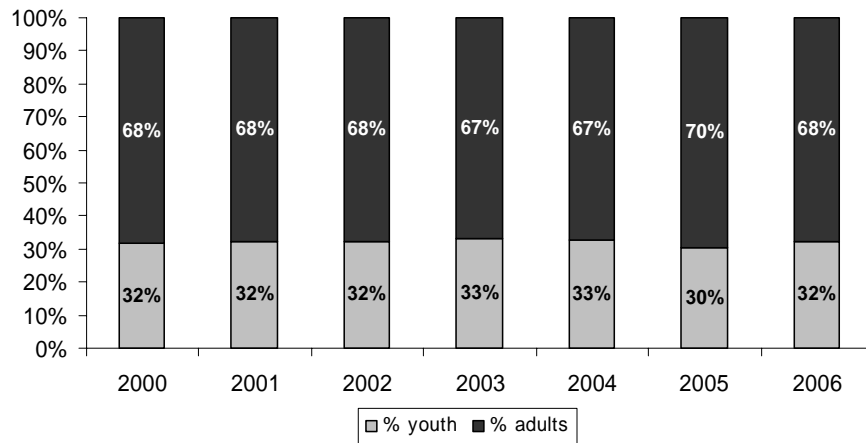


Figure 2 shows the percentage of youth (victims under the age of 18) and adult PSCR cases by year. The portion of youth cases has remained relatively stable over the years and make up approximately one third of all PSCR cases. On average, nearly 1,000 PSCR cases are received each year (for youth and adult victims).

Figure 2.

Percentage of Youth and Adult PSCR Assaults by Year



Victim Characteristics

The PSCR form collects specific data on the victim of the sexual assault. Data analyzed below include: victim gender, victim age, and victim race.

Victim Gender, Age, and Race

As shown in Figure 3, youth victims of sexual assault were much more frequently female (94.2%) than male (5.3%).

Figure 3.
Gender of Youth Victims, 2000-2006

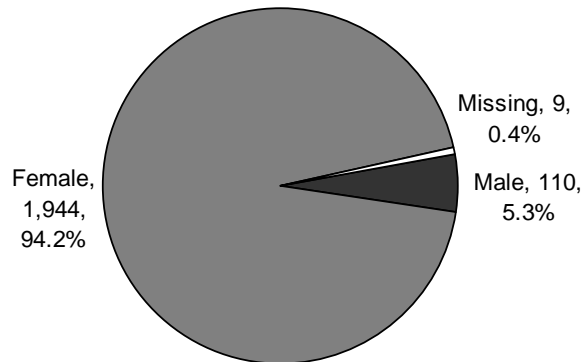
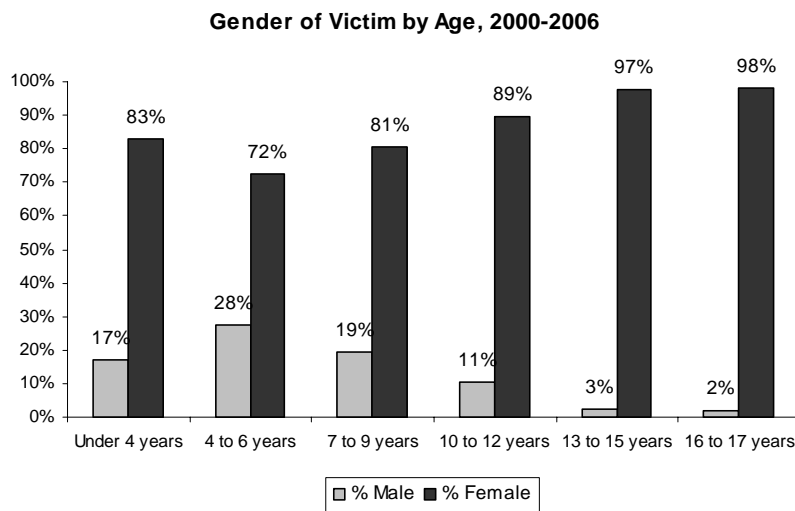


Figure 4 takes a more detailed look at how victim gender varies with age by examining the percentage of male versus female youth victims by age grouping⁷. Although females are much more frequently the victims of sexual assault than males in all age groups, the largest percentage of male victims was in the 4 to 6 age range (28%). The difference between male and female victimizations was the greatest in the 13 to 15 and 16 to 17 age groupings (3% male and 2% male respectively).

Figure 4.

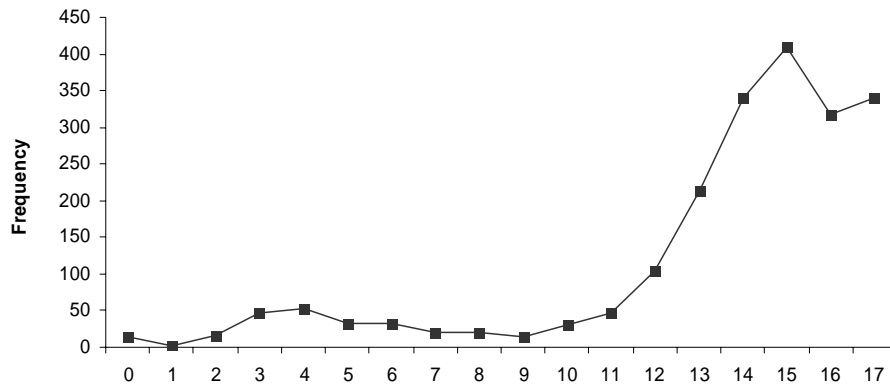


⁷ Figure 4 only includes cases where the victim gender is known.

The age range of victims in the dataset is largely a function of the PSCR form development. Prior to June 2006, data was not collected on all PSCR victims under the age of 12⁸ and, as such, victims under the age of 12 may be underrepresented in this analysis. The age of youth victims fluctuates considerably. The mean age of youth victims was 14 years. As depicted in Figure 5, there was a dramatic increase in victims from age 12 through 15. The number of youth victims peaked at age 15 and began a slight decline thereafter. The majority of victims in the dataset (84%) were age 12 through 17. Although not shown in the figure below, analysis showed that male victims were slightly younger than female victims; the mean age of male victims was 9 years, while the mean age of female victims was 14 years.

Figure 5.

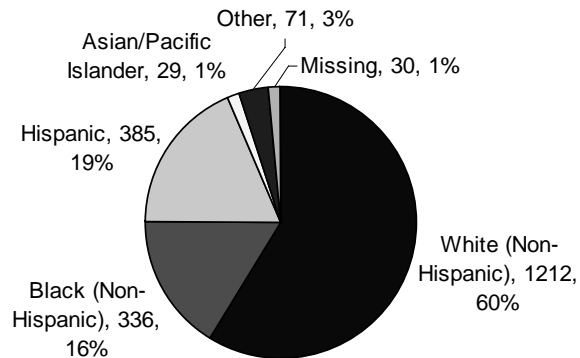
Age of Youth Victims, 2000-2006



The majority of youth victims were White (60%), followed by Hispanic (19%), and Black (16%) (see Figure 6). Three percent of victims were of other races and one percent Asian/Pacific Islander.

Figure 6.

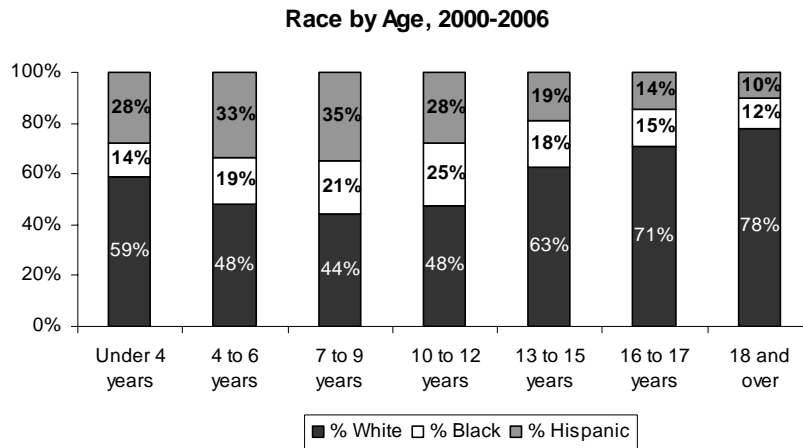
Race of Youth Victims, 2000-2006



⁸ See the data overview section for a more detailed explanation.

As shown in Figure 7, the racial composition of youth victims differs considerably when victims are grouped by age. Figure 7 only shows the breakdown of youth victims that fell in the three most common racial categories determined by the PSCR: White, Black and Hispanic. Although White was the most common victim race in all age groupings, Hispanic victims made up a large portion of both the 4 to 6 and 7 to 9 age grouping. Over one third of victims in the 4 to 6 and 7 to 9 age groups were Hispanic compared to only one tenth in the 18 and over (adult) victims group. The share of Black victims in all youth age groups was also higher than the share in the adult victims group. These findings suggest that there is greater racial diversity among youth victims than adult victims.

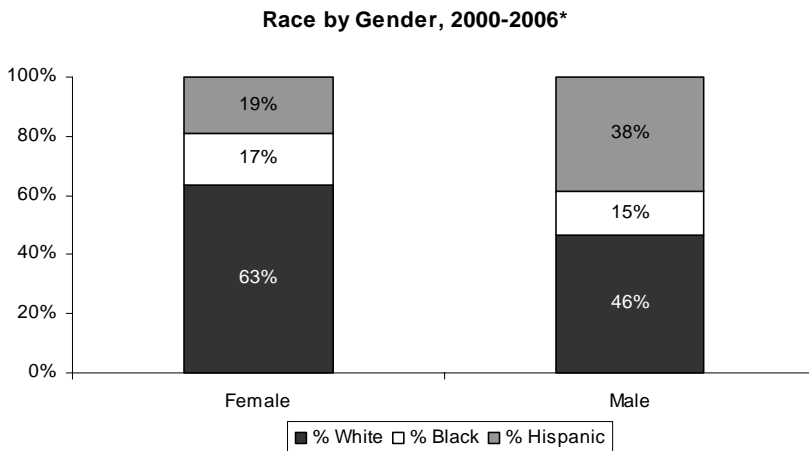
Figure 7.



Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding

There are differences in the racial composition of female and male youth victims. Figure 8 shows the breakdown of youth victims that fell in the three most common racial categories: White, Black and Hispanic. White victims made up 63% of the female youth victims compared to only 46% of the male youth victims. Male youth victims in the dataset were more commonly of minority races (53%) than White (46%).

Figure 8.



Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding

Assailant Characteristics

The PSCR form asks victims to identify some key information regarding their assailant(s). Data is collected on the number of assailants, gender of assailants, and the relationship between the victim and assailant.

Number of Assailants

The PSCR collects information on the number of assailants for each assault. The number of reported assailants ranged from one to 17 in each assault. The majority of cases involved only one assailant (84%) but a considerable share of cases involved more than one assailant (16%)⁹.

Number of Assailants by Victim Gender

Table 1 shows the number of assailants by victim gender. Again, most cases involved only one assailant (84%), 9% of victims were assaulted by two assailants, and 7% by three or more assailants¹⁰. Table 1 also shows that there is a difference in the number of assailants for male and female youth victims. Females were more likely than males to be assaulted by two assailants (10% compared to 2%). However, the PSCR sample of male youth victims is very small so making any generalizations about victim gender and number of assailants is not recommended.

Table 1.
Number of Assailants by Victim Gender

| Number of Assailants | | | |
|----------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 or more |
| All Victims | 84% | 9% | 7% |
| Female | 83% | 10% | 7% |
| Male | 92% | 2% | 6% |

⁹ Not included in this calculation are 141 cases where the victim did not identify the number of assailants.

¹⁰ Only includes cases where victim gender and number of assailants are both known.

Gender of Assailants

For both female and male youth victims nearly all of the assailants were male (99%)¹¹. Only 1% of female victims were assaulted by a female assailant and 2% of male victims were assaulted by a female assailant.

Table 2.
Gender of Assailant by Victim Gender, 2000-2006

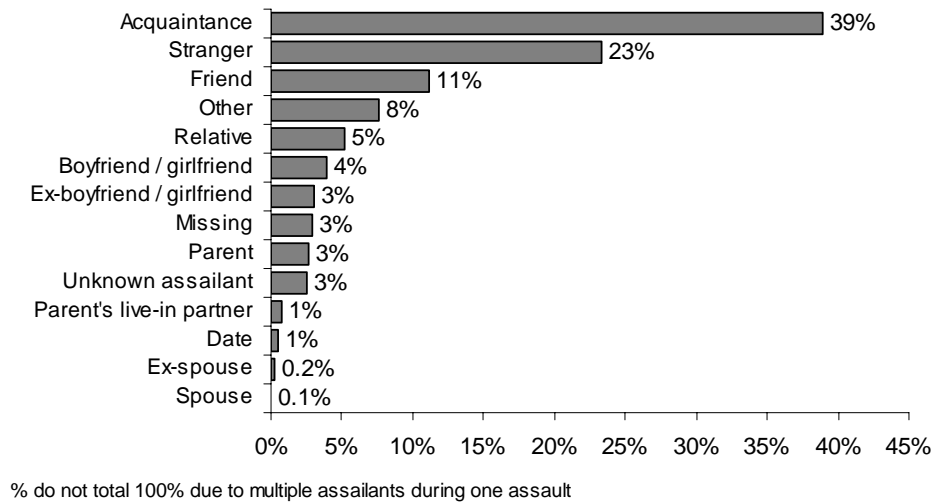
| | Male Assailant | Female Assailant |
|----------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Female Victim | 99% N=1716 | 1% N=25 |
| Male Victim | 98% N=85 | 2% N=2 |

Assailant-Victim Relationship

Youth victims were asked to identify their relationship to the assailant in their assault. Data were analyzed to determine the most common relationship types for youth victims. The relationship categories are not mutually exclusive because one assault may have multiple assailants and therefore fall into multiple categories.

As shown in Figure 9, the most commonly indicated relationship type for youth victims was acquaintance (39%), followed by stranger (23%), and friend (11%).

Figure 9.
Victim's Relationship to Assailant, 2000-2006



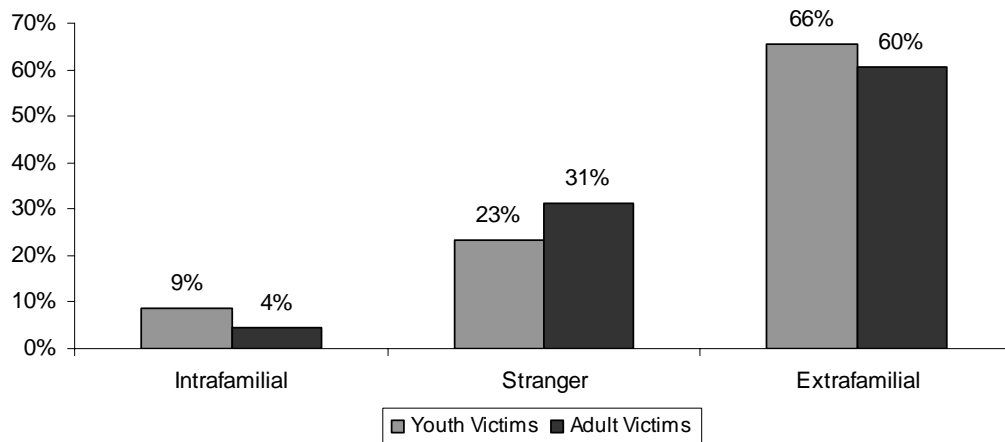
¹¹ Only includes cases where victim gender and assailant gender were reported.

In order to understand the nature of victim-offender relationships more generally, relationship types were collapsed into three general categories - “intrafamilial,” “extrafamilial,” and “stranger.” The intrafamilial category includes relatives, spouses, parents and parent’s live-in partners. The extrafamilial category includes acquaintances, friends, ex-boyfriends/girlfriends, boyfriends/girlfriends, dates, and ex-spouses. The stranger category includes stranger and unknown relationship types.

Figure 10 shows the relationship types condensed into the three general categories defined above. Youth PSCR victims are compared to adult PSCR victims to see if differences exist in assailant relationship types. The most common relationship category for both youth victims and adult victims was extrafamilial (66% for youth victims and 60% for adult victims). Although assailant relationship categories are similar for youth and adult victims, some subtle differences exist. When compared to adult victims, youth victims were more likely to be assaulted by an intrafamilial assailant (9% compared to 4%) and less likely to be assaulted by a stranger (23% compared to 31%).

Figure 10.

Victim's Relationship to Assailant, 2000-2006

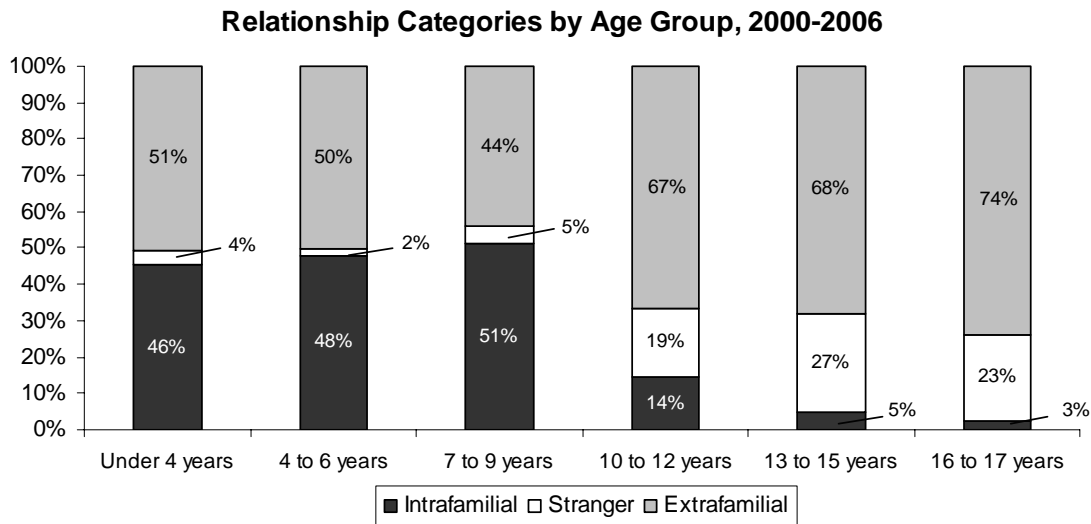


Cases with missing and unknown assailants are not included.
 Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding and multiple assailants.

Victim-Assailant Relationship by Age

As you can see in Figure 11, the victim-assailant relationship varies considerably when victims are grouped by age¹². Victims under the age of 9 were victimized by an intrafamilial assailant at a much higher rate than victims age 10 and over. The likelihood of being assaulted by a stranger or extrafamilial offender increased dramatically for victims age 10 and older (stranger assaults made up 4% of those perpetrated on victims under 4 compared to 23% for victims age 16 to 17).

Figure 11.



Cases with missing and unknown assailants are not included.
 Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding and multiple assailants.

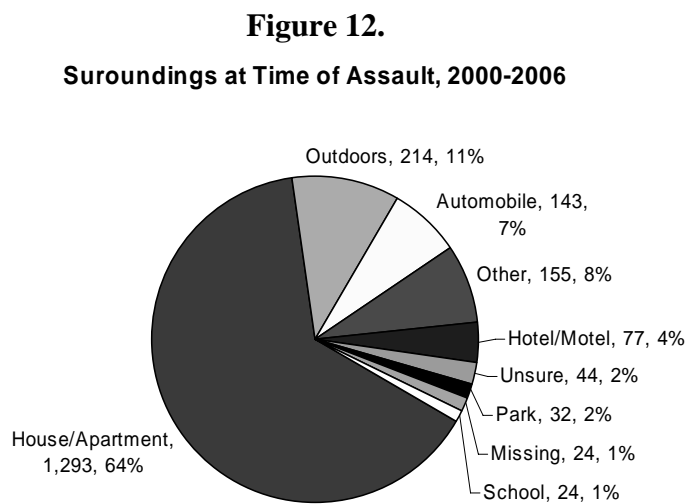
¹² Figure 11 only includes cases where the victim-assailant relationship is known.

Incident Characteristics

The PSCR form collects data on the characteristics of the assault, which includes: assault surroundings, city of assault, time of assault, month of assault, type of force used, injuries sustained, and reporting to police.

Assault Surroundings

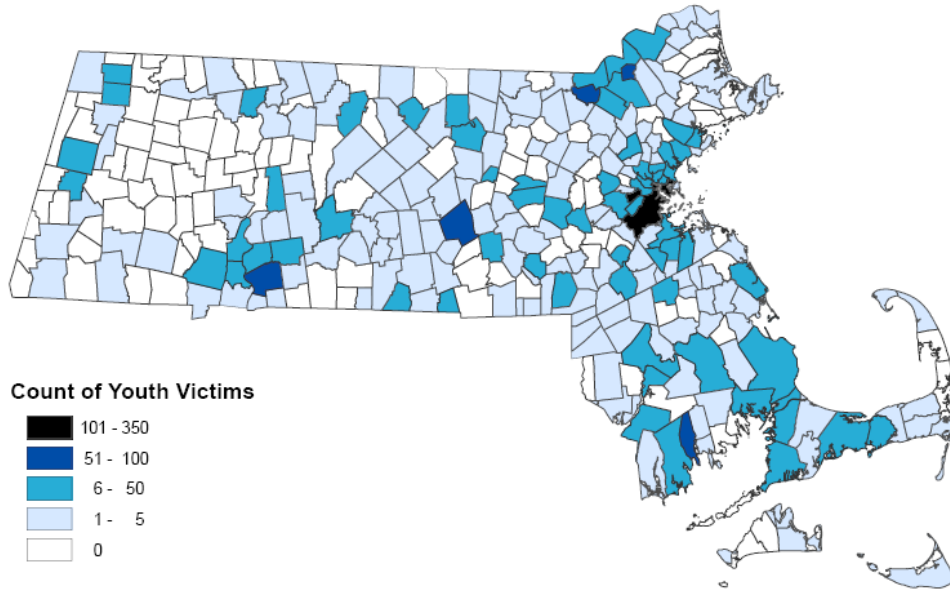
The PSCR data collection form asks victims about surroundings at the time of the assault. Figure 12 shows that for youth victims the most common assault surroundings were house/apartment (64%) followed by outdoors (11%).



City of Assault

Two hundred and thirty-nine Massachusetts communities had PSCR youth sexual assaults from 2000 to 2006 (or 68% of Massachusetts cities). A total of 1,919 assaults are shown on the map below¹³. The map displays the distribution of PSCR youth assaults in Massachusetts from 2000 through 2006.

Distribution of Youth Victims by City, 2000-2006



¹³ Only assaults that occurred in Massachusetts cities are displayed on the map. Not included on the map are 81 assaults where the city was unknown and 63 assaults where the city was located outside of Massachusetts.

Table 3 shows which communities had the largest number of PSCR youth assaults between 2000 and 2006. Counts were used to show PSCR distribution around the state rather than rates because of the small number of youth assaults per community per year. Very small counts of assaults coupled with small community populations can inflate rates and thus be very deceiving. Without calculating rates it is impossible to make comparisons among the different Massachusetts communities.

Table 3.

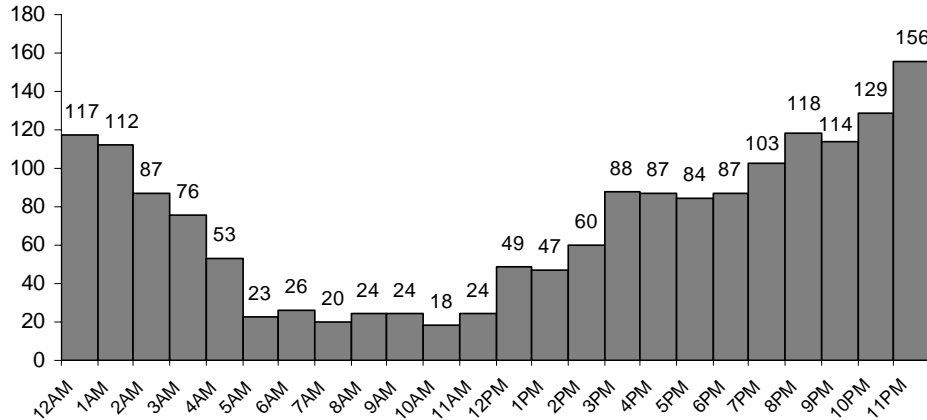
Ten communities with the largest number of PSCR youth assaults, 2000-2006

| City/Town | Population | Number of Assaults |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Boston | 589,141 | 347 |
| Springfield | 152,082 | 98 |
| Lawrence | 72,043 | 89 |
| Worcester | 172,648 | 66 |
| Lowell | 105,167 | 55 |
| New Bedford | 93,768 | 51 |
| Brockton | 94,304 | 47 |
| Lynn | 89,050 | 41 |
| Fall River | 91,938 | 40 |
| Haverhill | 58,969 | 34 |

Time of Assault

Figure 13 shows the time of day that youth assaults occurred. The number of youth assaults increase throughout the day and peak in the late night and early morning hours. The largest numbers of assaults occurred between 11 PM and 12 AM (156) while the fewest assaults occurred between 10 AM and 11 AM (18).

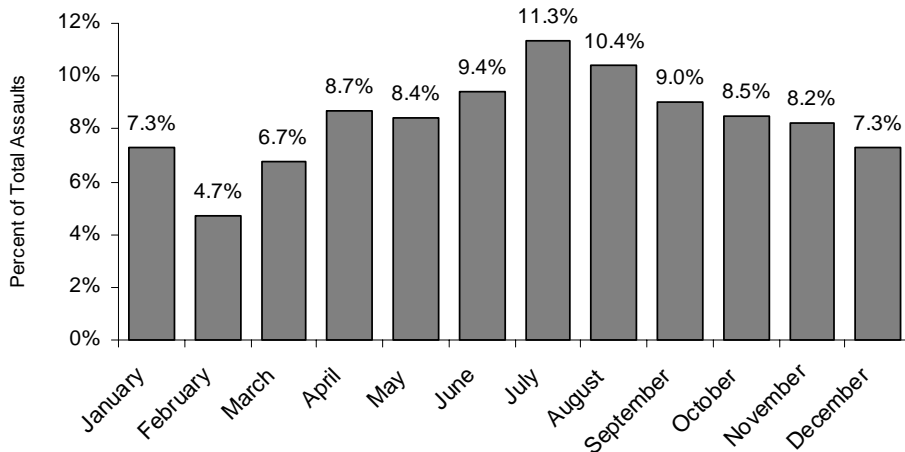
Figure 13.
Time of Assault, 2000-2006



Month of Assault

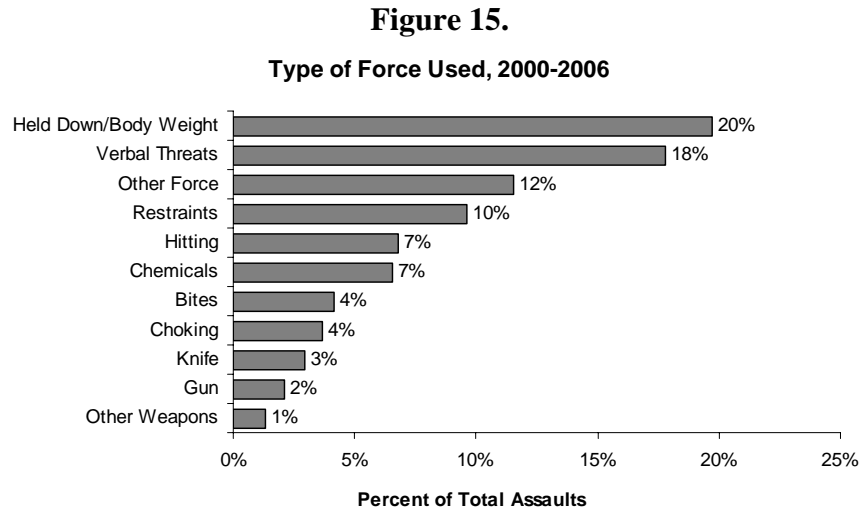
Figure 14 indicates that there is a slight increase in youth assaults during the summer months. The most common assault month was July (11.3%). Thirty-one percent of youth assaults occurred in June, July and August compared to 19% in December, January and February.

Figure 14.
Month of Assault, 2000-2006



Types of Force Used

Victims self reported the types of force used during the assault on the original PSCR form. Figure 15 shows that the most common type of force used on youth victims was body weight/holding down (20%) followed by verbal threats (18%)¹⁴. The use of weapons such as knives and guns were relatively uncommon (2%-3%).



Note: percentages do not total 100% due to multiple responses

Injuries Sustained

The PSCR form asks whether the assailant and/or victim received any injuries that resulted in bleeding. Approximately 19% of youth victims reported injuries that resulted in bleeding and 2% of assailants received such injuries. Victims indicated that they were unsure as to whether they received injuries in 13% of cases and whether assailants received injuries in 24% of cases. The victim reported injuries that resulted in bleeding to *both* the patient and the assailant in only 1% of cases.

¹⁴ “Other Force” refers to things such as pushing and hair pulling.

Reporting to Police

The PSCR form asks whether the victim reported the crime to the police. Not all PSCR victims choose to report the assault to the police. In the case of youth victims, the decision to report to the police is usually made by the parent or legal guardian. In cases where teen victims seek medical treatment without parental involvement, they decide whether or not to report the assault to the police. In approximately 80 percent of youth victim cases the assault was reported to the police. When compared to the rates of police reporting for adult victims, it was found that rates of youth victim reporting were higher than adult victim reporting (80% versus 69% respectively). As shown in Table 4, the percentage of youth victim cases reported to police fluctuated very little between 2000 and 2006, ranging from 76% to 86%.

Table 4.
Percentage of youth PSCR assaults reported to police, 2000-2006

| Year | Percent Reported |
|------|------------------|
| 2000 | 82% |
| 2001 | 83% |
| 2002 | 86% |
| 2003 | 82% |
| 2004 | 83% |
| 2005 | 80% |
| 2006 | 76% |

Rates of police reporting varied for victims of different age groups. Sexual assault cases involving victims age 7 to 9 and cases involving victims age 10 to 12 were the most likely to be reported to the police (89%) while cases involving victims under age 4 were the least likely to be reported (59%)¹⁵.

Table 5.
Percentage of youth PSCR assaults reported to police by age, 2000-2006

| Age | Percent Reported |
|----------|------------------|
| Under 4 | 59% |
| 4 to 6 | 77% |
| 7 to 9 | 89% |
| 10 to 12 | 89% |
| 13 to 15 | 86% |
| 16 to 17 | 77% |

¹⁵ The decision to report to the police is made by the parent or legal guardian.

Child Abuse Reports

According to M.G.L. Chapter 119, Section 51A, certain professionals (including physicians and nurses) are required to report cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS). For youth victims in the PSCR dataset, 51A child abuse reports were filed in only 47% of cases. However, there are various reasons that a 51A might not have been filed, such as the youth already having an open DSS case.

Future Directions

This report contains basic descriptive statistics on youth PSCR cases and represents a first attempt at better understanding this victim population. The Research and Policy Analysis Division of EOPSS hopes to conduct more sophisticated analysis techniques on this dataset in the future in order to answer more complex research questions.