
Analysis of Sexual Assault Data

September 2012

According to data collected by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR), from 2009 to 2011, more than 18,200 survivors of sexual violence sought services at rural rape crisis centers. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania analyzed PCAR data to better understand the extent of reported sexual assaults in rural counties.

The analysis indicated that most rural survivors who sought services were female and that many knew their abuser. The analysis also indicated that, in both rural and urban counties, there were no significant correlations between the total number of persons who sought sexual assault services per 100,000 residents and selected socio-economic indicators, such as household characteristics, income, education, unemployment, and crime rates.

Methods

PCAR provides services to survivors of sexual violence and their significant others through its statewide network of 50 rape crisis centers. The centers serve all 67 Pennsylvania counties and record collected data in a “Survivor Profile” database.

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania obtained “Survivor Profile” data from PCAR for 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011. This aggregated, county-level data contained 157 variables including the age, gender, and race of unduplicated survivors of sexual assault. The data also included the type of assault, the relationship of the survivor to the abuser, whether or not the assault was reported to the police, if medical care was obtained, whether there was sexual violence via the Internet, whether the survivor had drug and alcohol issues, and if the survivor had any disability. For most of the variable groupings, survivors were identified as either children or adults.

To analyze the Survivor Profile data, the Center for Rural Pennsylvania took the following steps:

- Combined the three years of data into one dataset: The 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11 data were combined to balance the impact of any particular year with an extremely high or low number of sexual assault survivors. In the findings, the number of survivors and their characteristics are reported as a total for the three years. The time period is reported as 2009-11.
- Calculated the number of rural and urban assaults: Survivor information that was reported by rape crisis centers located in rural counties was considered to be rural. Similarly, information reported by centers located in urban counties was considered to be urban.
- Determined the per capita ratios: Using Census Bureau population, age and gender estimates from 2008 and 2009, and population counts from the 2010 Census, the Center calculated the proportion of the population that reported sexual assaults to

a rape crisis center. In the findings, the per capita ratios are expressed as the number of survivors per 100,000 residents.

- Correlated the number of assaults with selected socio-economic variables: Using a three-year average for unemployment, income, and crime, the Center determined what, if any, significant correlations existed between the number of rural and urban reported sexual assaults and the selected variables. It is important to point out that this analysis did not look at individuals and does not reflect the socio-economic status of individual survivors.

Data Limitations

Sexual assault is a serious offense; however, not all survivors report their assault to their local rape crisis center or even the police. The data analyzed here represent only those survivors who sought services at rape crisis centers between 2009-11. They do not represent all sexual assaults.

In addition, some survivors may not seek help until years after the incident. The demographic data collected by the rape crisis centers reflect the survivors’ characteristics when they received services, not when the assault took place.

Definitions

Rural and Urban: The Center for Rural Pennsylvania identified counties, and the rape crisis centers in those counties, as rural when their population density was below the statewide average of 284 persons per square mile. Counties, and the rape crisis centers in those counties, were considered urban when their

population densities were at or above the statewide density.

Sexual Assault: According to PCAR, sexual violence occurs any time a person is forced, coerced, and/or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity. The range of sexual violence includes rape, incest, child sexual assault, ritual abuse, date and acquaintance rape, statutory rape, marital or partner rape, sexual exploitation, sexual contact, sexual harassment, exposure, human trafficking and voyeurism. The data collected by PCAR reflect the sexual assault counselor’s understanding of the violation as reported by the survivor. In the findings presented below, the term “sexual assault” is used as an umbrella term to represent all incidents in the data.

Survivor Characteristics

Number of Survivors

From 2009-11, a total of 18,207 survivors, or 176 survivors per 100,000 residents, sought services at rural rape crises centers. During the same period, there were 42,369 urban survivors, or 154 survivors per 100,000 residents, who sought such services. Per capita, there was no significant difference between the number of rural and urban survivors seeking services.

Map 1 shows the number of sexual assault survivors who were provided services per 100,000 residents.

The three counties with the highest number of sexual assault services provided per capita were Fulton, Union, and Venango. In each of these counties, more than 370 assault services were provided per 100,000 residents. The three counties with the fewest number of sexual assault services provided per capita were Forest, Montgomerly, and Northampton, each with less than 70 assault services provided per 100,000 residents.

Gender, Age and Race

Among rural survivors who sought services, 89 percent were female, 10 percent were male, and for 1 percent of the survivors the gender was unknown. Among urban survivors, 85 percent were female, 14 percent male, and for 1 percent the gender was unknown.

Sixty-two percent of rural survivors who sought services were adults and 38 percent were children. Among urban survivors, 57 percent were adults and 43 percent children. As Table 1 shows, among females, the age group with the greatest number of reported assaults was the 25-to-59-years-old age group (44 percent). Among rural males, the largest age group was the under-12-years-old group (49 percent). There was a similar pattern among urban female and male survivors.

Map 1: Number of Sexual Assault Services Provided per 100,000 Population by County, 2009-11

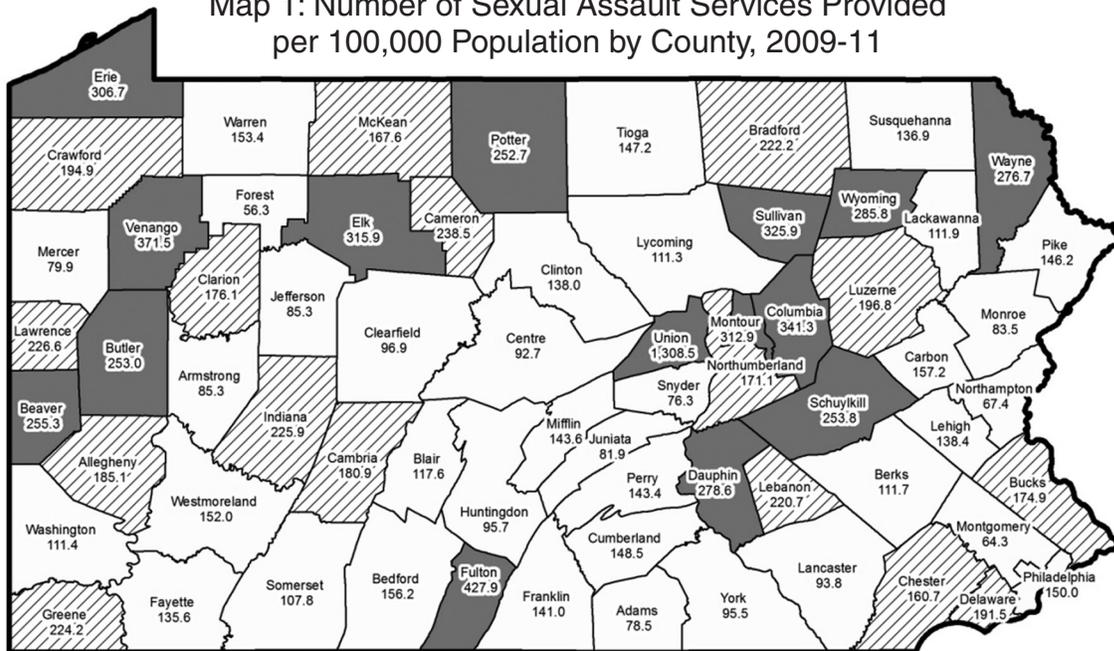


Table 1: Reported Rural and Urban Sexual Assault Survivors by Age and Gender, 2009-11*

	RURAL				URBAN			
	Females		Males		Females		Males	
	# Survivors	% of Total						
Under 12 Years Old	2,037	12.6%	942	49.7%	5,464	15.2%	2,439	40.3%
12 to 17 Years Old	3,422	21.1%	478	25.2%	9,141	25.4%	1,126	18.6%
18 to 24 Years Old	3,342	20.6%	160	8.4%	6,797	18.9%	777	12.9%
25 to 59 Years Old	7,190	44.4%	308	16.3%	14,106	39.2%	1,616	26.7%
60+ Years Old	215	1.3%	7	0.4%	479	1.3%	90	1.5%
Total # Survivors*	16,206	100.0%	1,895	100.0%	35,987	100.0%	6,048	100.0%

*Table includes only those who sought sexual assault services at a rural or urban rape crisis center. Excluded from the table are persons of unknown gender. Data source: PCAR Survivor Profile.

Eighty-two percent of rural survivors who sought services were white and 18 percent were non-white. This percentage of non-whites that sought sexual assault services was higher than the percentage of non-whites in the total rural population (approximately 6 percent according to the 2010 Census). Among urban survivors, 55 percent were white, and 45 percent were non-white. Again, the percentage of urban non-whites that sought sexual assault services was higher than the general non-white urban population (22 percent).

Types of Assaults

“Sexual assault” is a legal term as well as an umbrella term referring to a number of different types of sexual violations. Because the information collected by PCAR reflects the sexual assault counselor’s understanding of the violation as described by the survivor, the different types of assault may not be legally precise. In addition, it is possible for a survivor to experience different types of assault.

From 2009-11, the three most common types of reported sexual assault for rural children were sexual child abuse (36 percent), sexual assault (23 percent), and indecent assault (20 percent). These violations

were similar for urban children except for sexual assault (7 percent).

For rural adults, the two most reported types of violations were sexual assault (43 percent) and rape (33 percent). For urban adults, these two violations were also the most commonly reported, however, the number of reported incidents was lower (20 percent were sexual assault and 38 percent were rape).

Abuser

The PCAR data collection form asks survivors to identify their relationship to the abuser. The form identifies 13 types of abusers such as parent, lover, stranger, etc. The Center for Rural Pennsylvania collapsed the abuser list into five categories: family member/relative; friend/acquaintance; spouse/lover; stranger/unknown; and other (clergy, authority figure, etc.). The totals in Table 2 do not add up to 100 percent because some survivors may have multiple abusers.

In rural areas, the most frequently reported abusers of children and adults were persons who were known to the survivor, such as family members/relatives, friends/acquaintances or spouses/lovers.

Table 2: Reported Rural and Urban Sexual Assault Survivor Relationship to Abuser by Age, 2009-11

	RURAL				URBAN			
	Children (<18 Years Old)		Adults (18+ Years Old)		Children (<18 Years Old)		Adults (18+ Years Old)	
	# Abusers	% of Total	# Abusers	% of Total	# Abusers	% of Total	# Abusers	% of Total
Family Member/Relative	3,010	43.7%	2,812	24.8%	7,479	40.9%	5,692	23.6%
Friend/Acquaintance	1,991	28.9%	2,647	23.4%	4,974	27.2%	6,346	26.4%
Spouse/Lover	359	5.2%	4,190	37.0%	497	2.7%	4,631	19.2%
Stranger/Unknown	1,169	17.0%	2,948	26.0%	3,726	20.4%	8,587	35.7%
Other	709	10.3%	735	6.5%	2,415	13.2%	2,585	10.7%
Total # Survivors	6,890	--	11,317	--	18,291	-	24,078	--

To calculate the percentage, the number of abusers was divided by the number of survivors. Totals do not add up to 100 percent due to multiple abusers. Data source: PCAR Survivor Profile.

Obtained Medical Care/Reported to Police

According to the data, 33 percent of rural children and 23 percent of rural adults obtained medical care as a result of their abuse. These percentages were lower than those for urban children (36 percent) and urban adults (31 percent).

There was a similar rural/urban gap when it came to reporting the abuse to the police. According to the data, 63 percent of sexual assaults of rural children and 33 percent of those of rural adults were reported to the police. Among urban survivors, 76 percent of sexual assaults of children and 43 percent of those of adults were reported to the police.

Drugs and Alcohol

PCAR collects information from survivors on whether or not drugs or alcohol played a role in the assault. It is unknown whether these issues were a factor at the time of the abuse, or if they occurred before or after the abuse.

According to the data, 9 percent of rural children and 30 percent of rural adults said that drugs or alcohol played a role in the assault. Among urban children and adults, 3 percent and 20 percent, respectively, said drugs or alcohol played a role in the assault.

Internet

Survivors were asked if the Internet was either their first point of contact for sexual violence, or a tool used in perpetrating the violence. For rural and urban children and adults, the Internet does not appear to be a significant factor. Only 1 percent of all survivors said that the Internet was involved in their abuse.

Correlations

In both rural and urban counties, there were no significant correlations between the total number of persons who sought sexual assault services per 100,000 residents and selected socio-economic indicators including household characteristics, income, education, unemployment, poverty rates, number of police officers and crime rates.

The lack of significant correlations suggests that, at the county level, the number of persons seeking services in a county is unlikely to have any relationship to larger community factors such as the number of police officers, unemployment rates or poverty rates.

Summary

According to PCAR data, from 2009 to 2011, more than 18,200 survivors sought services at rural rape crisis centers. The majority of survivors were women

(89 percent). Children accounted for 38 percent of all survivors.

While the majority of rural survivors seeking services were white (82 percent), the percentage of non-white survivors (18 percent) was higher than the entire rural non-white population. Among urban survivors, there was a similar pattern.

Per capita, there were no significant differences in the number and types of rural and urban survivors, which suggests that reported sexual assaults are not unique to rural or urban counties.

Most rural survivors knew their abuser. According to the data, the majority of rural sexual assaults were committed by a person known to the survivor. While assaults by strangers occurred, they were less frequent.

The data indicated that the number of rural survivors seeking sexual assault services was not correlated with socio-economic indicators, such as unemployment, poverty, and household type. This suggests that sexual assault is a statewide issue and not unique to counties with specific characteristics, such as low-income or high youth populations.

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