



SEXUAL VIOLENCE/INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: SOCIOECONOMIC AND MENTAL HEALTH CORRELATES OF HIGH PREVALENCE

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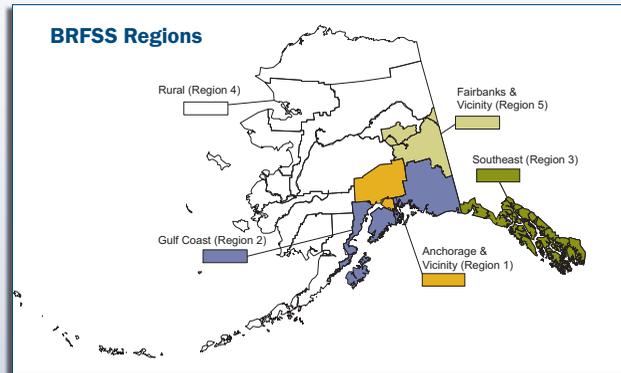
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Background

For nearly 30 years, Alaska has ranked among the top five states in the nation for forcible rape.¹ Over 5,000 incidents of domestic violence were reported in FY2007.¹ To assist in monitoring the high rates of domestic violence and sexual assault, the Alaska BRFSS has periodically included a state-added Sexual Violence/Intimate Partner Violence (SV/IPV) module since 1999. Prevalence estimates are reported for demographic, socioeconomic, chronic disease, and risk behavior subgroups to help identify those populations most at risk for SV/IPV.

Methods

The BRFSS is an ongoing random-digit-dial survey of non-institutionalized adults aged 18 years and older that is conducted in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and US territories. All BRFSS questionnaires and the BRFSS methods and weighting procedure are available on the CDC BRFSS website (www.cdc.gov/brfss). In Alaska, a stratified sampling plan was used and sample drawn from 5 regions defined by combinations of census areas and boroughs (Anchorage and Vicinity, Gulf Coast, Southeast, Rural, and Fairbanks and Vicinity).



Four state-added questions from the 2006 Alaska BRFSS (Box 1) were used to examine the prevalence of SV/IPV among subpopulations based upon demographic, socioeconomic, and available physical and mental health risk factors for that year.

Box 1: 2006 SV/IPV questions

- As a child, did you ever see or hear one of your parents or guardians being hit, slapped, punched, shoved, kicked or otherwise physically hurt by their spouse or partner?
- Has anyone ever made you take part in any sexual activity when you really did not want to (including touch that made you uncomfortable)?
- In your lifetime, has an intimate partner ever hit, slapped, punched, shoved, kicked, choked, hurt or threatened you?
- In the past 5 years, have you ever feared for your safety or been hit, slapped, kicked, choked, or otherwise physically hurt by a current or former intimate partner?

The BRFSS data were weighted to represent the distribution of Alaskan adults by sex, age and region. SAS v9 combined with SUDAAN were used to produce weighted percentages and 95% confidence intervals. Groups were considered significantly different if their confidence intervals did not overlap.

To help identify Alaskans at greatest risk, prevalence estimates are reported for demographic, socioeconomic, chronic disease status and risk behaviors. Prevalence estimates greater than or equal to 20% have been bolded to indicate subpopulations in which screening for SV/IPV will result in identifying approximately one victim for every five individuals surveyed. Instances where a subpopulation has a significantly higher prevalence than other components are indicated by italics.

Results

The prevalence of sexual violence and intimate partner violence is a major public health concern in Alaska. Over 1 in 5 adult Alaskans has been a victim of intimate partner violence (22.4%). A similar number has witnessed intimate partner violence of their parent or guardian (19.1%). About 1 in 7 adult Alaskans have experienced unwanted sexual activity (14.0%). Over 1 in 20 respondents had experienced intimate partner violence within the past 5 years (5.4%).

Table 1. Demographic and Socioeconomic Distribution of Sexual Violence/Intimate Partner Violence in Alaskan Adults

Prevalence of Risk Factors with Subpopulations	Intimate Partner Violence of Parent or Guardian	Unwanted Sexual Activity	Lifetime Intimate Partner Violence	Intimate Partner Violence Past 5 Years
Population at Risk				
Percentage	19.1% (16.9%-21.6%)	14.0% (12.1%-16.2%)	22.4% (20.0%-24.9%)	5.4% (4.3%-6.8%)
Population	83,347	61,077	97,760	23,608
Gender				
Female	22.2% (18.9%-25.9%)	24.2% (20.9%-28.0%)	30.1% (26.3%-33.9%)	7.7% (5.9%-10.0%)
Male	16.2% (13.4%-19.5%)	4.3% (3.0%-6.2%)	15.0% (12.0%-18.5%)	3.2% (2.1%-5.0%)
Age Groups				
18-24	15% (10%-23%)	15% (9%-23%)	19% (12%-27%)	11% (6%-18%)
25-34	20% (14%-28%)	16% (12%-22%)	22% (17%-28%)	8% (4%-11%)
35-44	22% (17%-27%)	14% (10%-19%)	23% (19-28%)	4% (3%-6%)
45-64	20.5% (16.9%-24.6%)	14.3% (11.5%-17.6%)	25.2% (21.2%-29.6%)	4.2% (2.8%-6.2%)
65+	13% (8%-21%)	8% (4%-13%)	16% (10%-24%)	1% (0%-2%)
Race and Ethnicity				
American Indian / Alaska Native	28% (21%-35%)	15% (11%-20%)	31% (24%-39%)	7% (5%-11%)
White	17.9% (15.4%-20.7%)	14.3% (12.1%-16.9%)	20.2% (17.7%-23.0%)	4.7% (3.6%-6.2%)
Other/Unk/Ref/Missing	17% (10%-26%)	10% (6%-19%)	26% (18%-34%)	8% (3%-16%)
Geographic Location				
Anchorage & Vicinity	18% (14%-22%)	14% (11%-18%)	23% (19%-27%)	4% (3%-7%)
Fairbanks & Vicinity	19% (14%-22%)	14% (11%-18%)	19% (15%-24%)	7% (5%-10%)
Gulf Coast	20% (16%-25%)	15% (12%-20%)	23% (18%-28%)	7% (4%-11%)
Southeast	18% (14%-23%)	14% (11%-19%)	21% (17%-25%)	4% (3%-7%)
Rural	29% (23%-36%)	11% (8%-15%)	26% (20%-32%)	8% (5%-12%)
Education Level (25 year and older)				
High school graduate or Less	20.6% (16.9%-24.9%)	13.7% (10.6%-17.7%)	24.4% (20.3%-29.0%)	6.8% (4.9%-9.4%)
At least some college	22.7% (18.3%-27.6%)	16.4% (13.0%-20.6%)	27.1% (22.3%-32.3%)	6.9% (4.6%-10.1%)
College graduate	14.2% (11.0%-18.1%)	12.0% (8.1%-15.7%)	15.6% (12.3%-19.6%)	2.4% (1.5%-3.9%)
Income Level				
<\$25,000	20% (15%-26%)	23% (17%-30%)	32% (26%-40%)	10% (6%-15%)
\$25,000-\$49,999	23% (18%-29%)	13% (10%-18%)	25% (20%-31%)	7% (5%-11%)
\$50,000+	18.0% (15.0%-21.4%)	12.7% (10.3%-15.6%)	18.6% (15.6%-22.1%)	3.1% (2.0%-4.7%)
Family Income Level				
Poor /Near Poor (<200% Poverty Threshold)	22% (17%-28%)	19% (14%-26%)	30% (24%-37%)	9% (6%-14%)
Middle/High Income (≥200% Poverty Threshold)	18.9% (16.3%-21.9%)	13.3% (10.7%-18.2%)	20.5% (17.8%-23.4%)	4.2% (3.1%-5.7%)
Veteran Status				
Yes	21% (16%-28%)	9% (6%-14%)	15% (10%-21%)	2% (1%-4%)
No	18.6% (16.2%-21.2%)	15.5% (13.3%-18.0%)	24.3% (21.6%-27.2%)	6.3% (5.0%-8.0%)
Food Security				
Food Secure	17.9% (15.9%-20.4%)	12.1% (10.3%-14.2%)	19.6% (17.2%-22.3%)	3.7% (2.8%-4.0%)
Food Insecure	25% (17%-36%)	23% (15%-34%)	DSU	17% (10%-28%)

BOLD = Prevalence greater than or equal to 20%.
 Italic = Significantly higher than one or more subpopulations.
 DSU = Data statistically unreliable as confidence interval half-width exceeds 10.
 Estimates based upon less than 500 respondents have the prevalence and confidence limit values expressed as integers.

Subpopulations with high prevalence (≥20%) of victimization (resulting from one or more of unwanted sexual activity, lifetime intimate partner violence, or intimate partner violence within the past 5 years) include women, adults aged 25-64 years, education level of less than college graduation, and incomes of less than \$50,000 or below the 200% poverty threshold, and being food insecure.

Table 2. Risk Factor Distribution and Comorbidities of Sexual Violence/Intimate Partner Violence

Prevalence of Risk Factors with Subpopulations	Intimate Partner Violence of Parent or Guardian	Unwanted Sexual Activity	Lifetime Intimate Partner Violence	Intimate Partner Violence Past 5 Years
General Health				
Excellent to Very Good	15.1% (12.5%-18.0%)	11.4% (9.3%-14.0%)	18.3% (15.5%-21.6%)	4.7% (3.3%-6.6%)
Good	22.9% (18.4%-28.0%)	16.3% (12.3%-21.2%)	22.7% (18.5%-27.5%)	5.3% (3.6%-7.8%)
Fair/Poor	30% (23%-38%)	21% (16%-28%)	40% (32%-48%)	9% (5%-14%)
Asthma				
Yes	27% (21%-34%)	21% (16%-28%)	33% (26%-40%)	8% (5%-12%)
No	13.6% (10.9%-16.9%)	12.8% (10.8%-15.1%)	20.6% (18.1%-23.4%)	4.7% (3.6%-6.2%)
Smoking Status				
Current Smoker	30% (24%-36%)	20% (16%-26%)	32% (26%-38%)	9% (6%-12%)
Former Smoker	19.5% (15.7%-23.9%)	13.9% (10.8%-17.9%)	27.1% (22.4%-32.4%)	6.5% (4.1%-10.0%)
Never Smoked	13.6% (10.9%-16.9%)	11.1% (8.8%-13.9%)	15.0% (12.2%-18.4%)	3.0% (2.0%-4.5%)
Flu Shot or Spray within Past 12 Months				
Yes	16.8% (13.3%-20.9%)	10.9% (8.5%-14.0%)	19.3% (15.5%-23.7%)	2.7% (1.7%-4.2%)
No	20.3% (17.5%-23.5%)	15.4% (12.8%-18.3%)	23.7% (20.8%-27.0%)	6.8% (5.2%-8.7%)
Anxiety				
Yes	28% (21%-36%)	32% (25%-40%)	44% (35%-51%)	11% (7%-16%)
No	17.9% (15.6%-20.5%)	11.5% (9.6%-13.7%)	19.5% (17.1%-22.2%)	4.4% (3.3%-5.9%)
Depression				
Yes	26% (21%-32%)	32% (27%-39%)	45% (38%-51%)	13% (9%-18%)
No	17.9% (15.4%-20.6%)	10.2% (8.3%-12.4%)	17.8% (15.4%-20.5%)	3.8% (2.8%-5.2%)
Current Depression Status				
No Depression	17.0% (14.5%-19.9%)	10.2% (8.3%-12.5%)	18.9% (16.1%-21.9%)	3.9% (2.7%-5.4%)
Mild Depression	23% (17%-31%)	22% (16%-29%)	31% (24%-39%)	9% (5%-14%)
Moderate to Severe Depression	DSU	DSU	DSU	17% (10%-26%)
Social and Emotional Support				
Always/Usually	17.4% (15.0%-20.2%)	12.8% (10.8%-15.2%)	20.1% (17.5%-23.0%)	3.8% (2.7%-5.2%)
Sometimes/Rarely/Never	25% (20%-31%)	19% (14%-24%)	32% (26%-39%)	12% (9%-17%)
Life Satisfaction				
Always/Usually	18.5% (16.2%-21.0%)	12.8% (10.8%-15.2%)	21.5% (19.1%-24.2%)	5.1% (3.9%-6.5%)
Sometimes/Rarely/Never	DSU	19% (14%-24%)	DSU	13% (7%-22%)

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Witnessing the domestic violence of parents/guardians or being a victim of SV/IPV is associated with high rates (≥20%) of fair-to-poor assessments of general health, diagnosis of asthma, current smoking, and lack of emotional support. Mental health measures of diagnosed anxiety and/or depression, and at least mild current depression are associated with higher prevalences of victimization. Individuals diagnosed with anxiety and/or depression have some of the highest prevalences of SV/IPV.

Exposure to domestic violence of parents or guardians as children is strongly associated with sexual violence and domestic violence as adults. Over one-third of adult respondents who were victims of unwanted sexual activity, hurt or threatened by an intimate partner in their lifetime, or either feared for their safety or were physically hurt by the intimate partner within the past 5 years had witnessed intimate partner violence of a parent or guardian in their youth. Adults who witnessed domestic violence as youth were over twice as likely to be victims of SV/IPV.

Table 3. Interaction of Sexual Violence/Intimate Partner Violence Questions in Alaskan Adults

Prevalence of Risk Factors with Subpopulations	Intimate Partner Violence of Parent or Guardian	Unwanted Sexual Activity	Lifetime Intimate Partner Violence	Intimate Partner Violence Past 5 Years
Parent/Guardian Physically Hurt by Spouse/Partner				
Yes	100%	29% (23%-35%)	43% (37%-50%)	10% (7%-14%)
No	0%	10.4% (8.6%-12.6%)	17.3% (14.9%-19.9%)	4.3% (3.2%-5.8%)
Unwanted Sexual Activity				
Yes	39% (32%-47%)	100%	51% (44%-59%)	11% (8%-16%)
No	15.7% (13.5%-18.2%)	0%	17.8% (15.4%-20.4%)	4.4% (3.3%-5.8%)
Ever Hurt or Threatened by Intimate Partner				
Yes	37% (32%-43%)	32% (27%-38%)	100%	21% (17%-27%)
No	14.0% (11.8%-16.5%)	8.7% (6.9%-10.9%)	0%	0.8% (0.4%-1.8%)
Past 5 Years Feared for Safety or Physically Hurt by Intimate Partner				
Yes	36% (26%-47%)	DSU	88.1% (76.45-94.4%)	100%
No	18.1% (15.8%-20.6%)	13.1% (11.2%-20.6%)	18.5% (16.2%-21.0%)	0%

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Conclusions

Sexual violence/intimate partner violence is a major public health problem in Alaska. Individuals exhibiting fair-to-poor general health, lacking the social and emotional support, diagnoses of anxiety and/or depression, and at least mild depression should be screened for domestic violence. Domestic violence is significantly higher among those with diagnosed asthma and current smoking. Chronic disease programs need to collaborate with the behavioral health field in the surveillance of mental health correlates of sexual violence and intimate partner violence.

(1) Alaska Department of Public Safety, Council on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2007. Juneau.



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