

# Nearly six million American women became pregnant from rape, sexual coercion, or both during lifetime

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Experiencing a pregnancy from sexual violence is common in the United States, according to [research](#) conducted by investigators at the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

Nearly 6 million women in the United States who were raped, sexually coerced (defined as non-physically forced unwanted penetration), or both became pregnant as a result. This equates to about 1 in 20 American women pregnant as a result of rape, [sexual coercion](#), or both during their lifetime.

Lead investigator Denise V. D'Angelo, MPH, Division of Violence Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, explains, "Sexual violence is a major public health problem in the US that is associated with numerous health impacts, including pregnancy. Our study was the first to look at the national prevalence of pregnancy after sexual coercion and found it was even more common than pregnancy after rape."

The study also determined that about one third (35%) of the victims of either or both types of violence who became pregnant also reported a sexually transmitted disease (STD). For [rape victims](#) who got pregnant, two thirds (66%) said they were also injured, and more than 80% said they felt fearful or concerned for their safety.

Investigators analyzed the most recent data (2016/2017) from the CDC's [National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey](#), a random-digit-dial telephone survey of U.S. non-institutionalized adults 18 years and older.

The survey has the only nationally representative source of information on the topic. The survey asked about the experience and continuing impact of sexual violence. Data were segmented by current age, race/ethnicity, and region of residence, overall and among victims.

Dr. D'Angelo and her co-investigators emphasize that a comprehensive public health approach for the prevention of sexual violence is critical. They also highlighted strategies and approaches that leaders and practitioners can implement in response to the study's findings.

She says, "This study focuses attention on the intersection of violence and [reproductive health](#) and how rape and sexual coercion have a lasting impact on women's health and lives. Prevention of [sexual violence](#) is key, and so is ensuring access to services for survivors.

"Some evidence-based approaches to prevention include strengthening [economic opportunities](#) for women and families, helping to develop healthy dating and relationship skills, engaging boys and men in prevention, and screening for violence exposure during health care encounters to support survivors and provide referrals to services."

**More information:** Denise V. D'Angelo et al, Rape and Sexual Coercion Related Pregnancy in the United States, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.amepre.2023.11.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2023.11.001)

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