

Stalking

To better understand the extent of stalking and the context in which violence related to stalking occurs, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) collaborated in a comprehensive survey of violence against women. Conducted by Patricia Tjaden, Ph.D., at the Center for Policy Research, the National Violence Against Women Survey collected data from 8,000 women and 8,000 men 18 years of age or older from November 1995 through May 1996. The following data was released by NIJ in November of 1997 in a Bulletin entitled "The Crime of Stalking: How Big is the Problem?"

Survey findings indicate that stalking affects about 1.4 million victims annually.

Of those surveyed, 8 percent of women and 2 percent of men said they had been stalked at some point in their lives. Projected against 1995 estimates of the adult population, these percentages would result in 8.2 million female and 2 million male lifetime stalking victims, most of whom were stalked by only one stalker.

Researchers estimated that approximately 1 million women and 400,000 men are stalked each year in the United States.

About half of all female stalking victims reported their victimization to police and about 25 percent obtained a restraining order. Eighty percent of all restraining orders were violated by the assailant. About 24 percent of female victims who reported stalking to the police, as compared to 19 percent of male victims, said their cases were prosecuted. Of the cases in which criminal charges were filed, 54 percent resulted in a conviction. About 63 percent of convictions resulted in jail time.

Most victims knew their stalker. Women were significantly more likely to be stalked by an intimate partner -- a current or former spouse, a co-habiting partner, or a date. About 60 percent of stalking by intimate partners started before a relationship ended. Only 21 percent of stalkers identified by

female victims were strangers. However, men were more likely to be stalked by a stranger or an acquaintance.

About 87 percent of stalkers were men. Women tended to be victimized by lone stalkers, but in 50 percent of male victimizations, the stalker had an accomplice -- usually a friend or girlfriend. Most victims were between the ages of 18 and 29 when the stalking began.

Stalkers made overt threats to about 45 percent of victims; spied on or followed about 75 percent of victims; vandalized the property of about 30 percent of victims; and threatened to kill or killed the pet(s) of about 10 percent of victims.

In most cases, stalking episodes lasted 1 year or less, but in a few cases, stalking continued for 5 or more years. When asked why the stalking stopped, about 20 percent of the victims said it was because they moved away. Another 15 percent said it was because of police involvement. Also, stalking of women victims often stopped when the assailant began a relationship with a new girlfriend or wife.

About one-third of stalking victims reported they had sought psychological treatment. In addition, one-fifth lost time from work, and 7 percent of those never returned to work.