

**SEXUAL ASSAULT**

**Educating a Community About Non-Stranger Sexual Assault**

**SUMMARY**

Beginning in 1992, the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) Sex Crimes Unit began analyzing reported sexual assault cases with the hope that sexual assault could be prevented in our community by a better understanding of the character and context of the cases being reported. Almost immediately it was apparent that although most of the prevalent sexual assault prevention messages described a stranger assailant, the vast majority of reported sexual assaults actually involved non-strangers (70% or more).

This startling finding encouraged the SDPD to create a Speaker's Bureau to be available to educate the community about non-stranger sexual assault with the hope that this crime could be prevented. In 1993, SDPD partnered with the University of San Diego to assist with the development of non-stranger sexual assault education messages on college campuses. In 1995, a cooperative agreement between the SDPD Sex Crimes Unit and the San Diego City Schools allowed the Sexual Assault Speaker's Bureau to give sexual assault prevention presentations to San Diego City high school students.

In 1996, SDPD partnered with the San Diego State University Graduate School of Public Health to improve their ability to analyze the problem of non-stranger sexual

assault. An epidemiologic study of 1,288 sexual assault cases reported to the SDPD from 1994-1996 was conducted. The results of the study described sexual assault cases in terms of the age of the victim and the relationship of the victim to the suspect. Seventy-three percent (73%) of the cases in the three-year study involved non-strangers.

As a result of this extensive analysis, the content of the SDPD Speaker's Bureau presentation was modified to include our latest understanding of the dynamics of non-stranger sexual assault in San Diego. The SDPD also received Community Oriented Policing (COPS) funding to assist with the development of a sexual assault curriculum to be used in high schools and middle schools. As part of the data collection and analysis for this curriculum, key stakeholders were surveyed including students, parents, teachers, law enforcement (patrol and detectives), forensic examiners, and victim advocates. In response to the analysis, the SDPD placed sexual assault victim advocates in the Sex Crimes Unit to assist sexual assault victims as needed while their cases are under investigation. The SDPD continues to monitor all cases reported to the Sex Crimes Unit. Our efforts to improve community awareness about the dynamics of non-stranger sexual assault with an emphasis on adolescents, has increased the number of reports made to law enforcement by the target population. However, we hope that ultimately the prevention efforts we have described will help to reduce the overall number of sexual assaults in our community.

## **DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Scanning**

#### *The Problem*

When most members of the community hear the words rape or sexual assault, they immediately picture in their minds the horrifying and frightening image of an unknown assailant breaking into their homes and committing unspeakable acts. An alternate image is that of a stranger leaping out from behind some protective bushes in a parking lot to attack an unsuspecting wife, mother, or daughter as she is trying to do her weekly shopping, return home from a movie, or even take in an evening jog. When rape or sexual assault is portrayed in the media, these are also the most frequent images that we see. Among rape cases reported by the media, cases involving the stranger serial rapist certainly receive the most media coverage, and are the most talked about in community forums, around lunch tables at work, and at home. Sexual assault prevention strategies have also focused primarily on the risk to women from stranger assailants. Women are trained in self-defense tactics (including the use of mace, pepper spray, and weapons) so that they can safely get away from the potential stranger rapist.

Sexual assault by a stranger is certainly a very real and serious crime. However, for many years now throughout the United States, the vast majority of sexual assaults reported to law enforcement (over 75% of cases) are not committed by strangers. Rather, they are committed by individuals acquainted in some way with the victim. Neighbors, friends, friends of friends, ex-boyfriends, friends of boyfriends, co-workers,

roommates, friends of roommates, etc., these are the individuals most frequently reported to law enforcement as perpetrators of sexual assault. Why is this important to know? Because sexual assault cannot be prevented until the true dynamics of the crime are understood. And the dynamics of non-stranger sexual assault are very different than stranger sexual assault. The police officer trained to understand the dynamics of stranger sexual assault will not necessarily know how to respond most effectively when faced with a non-stranger sexual assault case. Differences between the two cases include the relationship between the suspect and victim prior to the assault, the victim's response to the assault, the community's response to the victim and the crime, the value of specific pieces of evidence in establishing the crime, the likelihood that the suspect will use a defense of "consent", and the response of judges and juries to the non-stranger sexual assault.

In 1993, under the direction of Sergeant Joanne Archambault, the San Diego Police Department Sex Crimes Unit began analyzing all sexual assaults reported to the unit. In that first year of analysis, 69% of the sexual assaults were perpetrated by non-strangers. In seven out the eight years since, (1993-2000), 70% or more of the sexual assaults reported were perpetrated by non-strangers. In most of the sexual assaults involving non-strangers, the crime occurs in the suspect or victim's own home, and many of them involve the use of drugs and alcohol by both victim and suspect. The common defense is "consent" which is very difficult to disprove. As a result, detectives spend many hours investigating crimes that have little or no promise of adjudication. Only 10% of the total number of cases received in the Sex Crimes Unit in 1994 were

submitted to the District Attorney's Office for evaluation and prosecution. Out of the 10% referred, only 50% were successfully adjudicated.

Young women are disproportionately represented as victims of the crime of sexual assault. Forty-nine percent (49%) of sexual assault victims are between 19 and 25 years of age. All sexual assaults are traumatic and have a life long effect on the victims. There is a common belief that sexual assaults committed by non-strangers are somehow less traumatic than those committed by strangers. This is a falsehood. Although stranger assaults tend to be more violent, assaults by non-strangers are often more traumatic because the victim is severely judged by her peers, the community and the judicial system from the first responding officers to the jury. Therefore, although they are the most frequently reported crimes, many of these crimes go unreported and very few of those reported ever see successful prosecution. In many cases, the victim recognizes the difficulty in pursuing prosecution and she chooses to suspend the investigation.

As early as 1993, it became apparent to the San Diego Police Department Sex Crimes Unit that the vast majority of their non-stranger sexual assault cases could be prevented through community education efforts. Potential non-stranger victims have many options that may dramatically decrease their risk of sexual assault if they understand the dynamics of non-stranger assault. Potential offenders can also be educated about the crime of non-stranger sexual assault and the consequences of such behavior. In addition, educating law enforcement, healthcare professionals, prosecutors, judges, and

jury pools about the dynamics of non-stranger sexual assault would help to create a community that understands that rape involving a non-stranger is as serious a threat to community health and safety as stranger assault.

## B. Analysis

Although the San Diego Police Department had been actively involved in Problem-Oriented Policing since 1988, few investigative units had looked at ways to problem solve and to contribute to prevention efforts. Typically, investigative units were reactive, meaning the problem was only addressed after the crime had occurred. Historically, a sexual assault prevention program would only address "stranger danger". Women participants were given information about how to fight off an attacker, use mace, or perhaps even a firearm. The problem was that law enforcement agencies rarely looked at their own data describing the percent of their caseload involving non-stranger assailants, and had unwittingly reinforced myths about sexual assault in our society. As one speaker described it, "A woman doesn't go to her front door with a can of mace when her neighbor comes over to borrow a cup of sugar".

After scanning the problem and completing some preliminary analysis, the Sex Crimes Unit hosted a Problem Analysis Advisory Committee meeting to further analyze the data and brainstorm possible responses. Attendees included representatives from law enforcement agencies, medical and military personnel, rape crisis centers, sex offender treatment providers, mental health workers, women's resource centers, school

personnel, and regular Advisory Committee members. As a result of this activity, the Sex Crimes Unit decided to develop a Speaker's Bureau with the goal of reducing the number of sexual assaults committed in the City of San Diego, with particular emphasis on the reduction of non-stranger sexual assaults.

In 1993, a 40-hour Speaker's Bureau Academy was held to train speakers to be competent to deliver presentations on sexual assault with particular emphasis on non-stranger sexual assault. The Speaker's Bureau is made up of a diverse group of people. One third of the group is male and several different ethnic groups are represented. Members range from 25-65 years. Each individual is motivated and qualified to give presentations to just about any group who requests the Bureau's services. In 1993, the Sex Crimes Unit began working with local colleges and universities to promote the message of non-stranger sexual assault. In 1995, a cooperative agreement was put in place with the San Diego City Schools for the Speaker's Bureau to provide sexual assault education to high school students. In 2001, the Speaker's Bureau was allowed to give a sexual assault presentation to middle school children. To date, approximately 9,000 high school students have attended SDPD Speaker's Bureau sexual assault presentations.

The SDPD Sex Crimes Unit has always recognized the importance of community collaborative partnerships. Although we felt very comfortable with our own analysis of the Sex Crimes data, we also recognized that others might be even more qualified to examine our statistics and make further recommendations for improved prevention

strategies regarding non-stranger sexual assault. To that end, we contacted the San Diego State University, Graduate School of Public Health and enlisted the help of an epidemiologist to further examine the sexual assault data in our community. Dr. Suzanne Lindsay, whose research interest is the study of violence, provided us with a more detailed study of the sexual assault data in the Sex Crimes Unit. In addition, Dr. Lindsay studied the information found during the forensic examination of SDPD Sex Crimes cases at two local hospitals (Children's hospital for adolescent cases, and Villa View Hospital for adult cases). Dr. Lindsay examined how the character and context of the sexual assault (including stranger vs. non-stranger cases), and the results of the evidentiary examination influenced the charging of an identified suspect. Some of Dr. Lindsay's findings are described in the following bullets:

In the calendar years 1994-1996 for crimes involving a male suspect and female victim:

- 76% of the cases reported to the Sex Crimes Unit involved adult victims, while 24% were adolescents (14-17 years).
- 73% were non-stranger assailants
  - 60% were acquaintance assailants including 69% non-dating relationships, 22% past or present dating relationships, 3% relatives, and 6% spouses or former spouses.
  - 13% were described as "brief encounter assailants", i.e. the victim knew the suspect less than 24 hours.
- Only 27% of reported cases involved stranger assailants
- 47% of the adult victim, non-stranger assaults occurred at the victim's home



- 41 % of the adolescent victim, non-stranger assaults occurred at the suspect's home
- 38% of the adult victim cases occurred from midnight-6am
- 48% of the adolescent victim cases occurred from 6pm-midnight, 24% occurred in the after school hours of 3pm-7pm.
- 79% of adult cases involving a stranger were reported within 72 hours
- Only 59% of adult cases involving a non-stranger were reported within 72 hours
- 60% of adolescent cases involving a stranger were reported within 72 hours
- Only 50% of adolescent cases involving a non-stranger were reported within 72 hours.
- Overall, weapons were used in only 15% of all reported cases
- A weapon was used in 36% of adult cases involving a stranger
- A weapon was used in only 10% of adult cases involving a non-stranger
- A weapon was used in 21 % of adolescent cases involving a stranger
- A weapon was used in only 4% of adolescent cases involving a non-stranger
- 19% of adults self-reported using alcohol or drugs prior to the assault
- 30% of adolescents self-reported using alcohol or drugs prior to the assault
- 53% of adolescents assaulted by "brief encounter" assailants self-reported using drugs or alcohol prior to the assault
- 34% of adults assaulted by "brief encounter" assailants self-reported using drugs or alcohol prior to the assault
- 46% of adolescents and 55% of adults received non-genital injuries as a result of the assault

- 75% of adolescents and 72% of adults received genital injuries as a result of the assault
- In only 10% of all cases was sperm found in a wet mount during the forensic exam
- In 12% of the cases the victim reported that the suspect used a condom
- Overall, 41 % of the cases were reviewed by the office of the district attorney
- « Overall, in 16% of the cases, an identified suspect was charged with a crime, in 25% of the cases the office of the district attorney declined to prosecute, in 19% of the cases the victim declined to prosecute, and 40% of the cases remain inactive or unsolved.
- Factors that affected the charging of an identified suspect in adult cases included the suspect's use of a weapon, bodily injuries, genital injuries, and the year of the report. These factors point to the need to prove "lack of consent" in most non-stranger cases involving an adult.
- Factors that affected the charging of an identified suspect in adolescent cases included only the length of time to report, and the year of the report. This finding occurs because "consent" is not an appropriate defense in adolescent cases.

### C. Response

The San Diego Police Department's own analysis, coupled with the analysis performed by Dr. Lindsay provided us with an extraordinary amount of valuable information about the character and context of sexual assault in our city, particularly non-stranger sexual

assault. We have used this information to build on our ability to create prevention messages that are appropriate to specific audiences as needed.

## Prevention Messages

### *College Campuses*

The San Diego Police Department worked closely with Rana Sampson at the University of San Diego to assist with the education of college students about the danger of non-stranger sexual assault. Ms. Sampson compared USD sexual assault statistics with nationwide college sexual assault data. As a result of this comparison, she drafted and disseminated a letter to all incoming freshmen and their parents describing expected behaviors of students on the college campus. She also initiated conversations with the parents of incoming freshmen on this topic. She created a presentation about sexual assault for all incoming freshmen to attend, and developed a brochure on the topic describing examples of non-stranger sexual assault scenarios that students could clearly understand. In terms of policy development, with the help of the SDPD, Ms. Sampson revised the USD University Protocols related to sexual assault to include reference to non-stranger assaults, and also revised the Student Code of Conduct.

### *Nigh Schools - SDPD Speaker's Bureau*

Information from our analysis phase has been used to revise the content of the Speaker's Bureau to be more relevant to the student audience and their experiences. Speakers for the SDPD Speaker's Bureau are continually being recruited and trained with our latest understanding of the data so that their presentations can be timely and relevant.

### *Community Oriented Policing Grant*

In part, as a result of our understanding of the problem of non-stranger sexual assault in San Diego, the San Diego Police Department Sex Crimes Unit, in collaboration with San Diego City Schools, and San Diego State University Graduate School of Public Health, received a Community Oriented Policing (COPS) 1999 School Based Partnership grant to continue to analyze the adolescent non-stranger sexual assault cases in preparation for the development of a high school and middle school curriculum on this topic. COPS funding is being used to continue to analyze the SDPD Sex Crimes data, and to survey key stakeholders about the prevention of adolescent sexual assault. Surveys ask key stakeholders about their knowledge of sexual assault (particularly non-stranger sexual assault), attitudes and beliefs, whether or not more about sexual assault should be taught in school, who should teach the information, and how it should be taught.

To date, we have received stakeholder surveys from students, parents, teachers, victim advocates, law enforcement (patrol and detectives), and forensic examiners. These surveys are giving us an excellent understanding of gaps in knowledge among the various stakeholders, and their beliefs about teaching this information. The majority of parents, teachers, police, and victim advocates have indicated on the surveys that a sexual assault curriculum should *begin no later than the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade*. Students indicate that they prefer movies, guest speakers, group discussions, and lectures in that order as the possible format for presenting this information. We will also be conducting focus groups with key stakeholders to share the results of these surveys and to receive further qualitative input for the development of the high school and middle school curriculum as well as modification of the SDPD Speaker's Bureau presentation content.

### Improvements in Investigation Strategies

#### *Victim Advocates working in the SDPD Sex Crimes Unit*

Dr. Lindsay's research showed us that in her study, in 19% of the sexual assault cases reported to the SDPD, the victim declined to continue with the investigation and prosecution of the case. Her work also showed that this percentage remained very stable throughout the three years of her study, 1994-1996. This finding led us to envision a stronger victim support system within the Sex Crimes Unit. As a result of this finding, we have placed victim advocates from local community-based victim advocacy

organizations in the SDPD Sex Crimes Unit on a part-time basis to assist victims and detectives as needed during the investigation of their cases. These victim advocates review cases with sex crimes investigators on a regular basis, and assist victims in the entire criminal justice process of their case. The presence of victim advocates within the unit also helps to educate Sex Crimes investigators to the special needs and characteristics of sexual assault victims. Victim advocates also learn a great deal about the nature of sexual assault investigations, the limits of the law, and the challenges that are faced daily by sex crimes investigators.

#### *DNA Identification of Suspects in Inactive Cases*

Dr. Lindsay's work also showed that 40% of the crimes she studied in her three-year study period remained inactive or unsolved. Many of these inactive cases are due to the investigator's inability to identify a suspect i.e., "suspectless" cases. The SDPD Sex Crimes Unit is also very fortunate to have recently received additional funding to assist in the clearance of these unsolved cases. Fortunately, because of our ongoing research and the help of our collaborators, the Sex Crimes Unit's database is one of the best in the country. As a result, we were able to identify the suspectless cases in need of DNA analysis relatively easily. Many cases have been linked showing the predatory nature of these offenders and suspects are in fact being identified using the latest in DNA technology. As funding increases for crime labs and technology continues to improve, DNA analysis will become more accessible to investigators and the number of cases left unsolved will dramatically decrease.

#### D. Assessment

The SDPD Sex Crimes Unit began to seriously analyze reported sexual assaults in 1992. As a result, we have almost ten years of data collected in an ACCESS database that can be used to monitor trends in reporting of sexual assault crimes over time, changes in victim and suspect demographics over time, and any trends in case outcome and adjudication. In fact, one of the greatest by-products of our interest in the prevention of non-stranger sexual assaults is that we have continued to modify and perfect our database such that it now contains many more valuable variables for analysis than it did in 1992. The database is maintained and updated daily in the Sex Crimes Unit, and it can be used for any number of analyses of interest. We recently used it to measure an increase in the reporting of sexual assaults by high school students after a SDPD Sex Crimes Unit Speaker's Bureau presentation. In fact, sexual assault education efforts frequently lead to an initial rise in the number of reported sexual assaults because of the victim's improved understanding that a crime had been committed and that she will be supported by law enforcement and others in the community.

At the conclusion of each SDPD Speaker's Bureau presentation, students are asked to evaluate the presentation. We have consistently received high praise from the students, and fairly frequently we have received disclosures of a crime from students attending Speaker's Bureau presentations.

We will continue to use the Sex Crimes database to monitor the number and type of reported sexual assaults in San Diego, with the hope that our continued education efforts will ultimately reduce the risk of non-stranger sexual assaults within our community. In addition, the SDPD Sex Crimes unit has a continuing collaborative relationship with many community organizations including the SDSU Graduate School of Public Health (GSPH). The GSPH continues to provide us with on-going assistance with analysis needs. Using student assistance from SDSU, National University, and Grossmont College, we are currently analyzing the relationship between forensic labwork results and law enforcement case outcomes. We are also investigating case differences within sub-groups of adolescent victims of sexual assault, i.e. comparing cases involving very young adolescents (14-15 years), to older adolescents (16-17 years).

### **Agency and Officer Information**

Investigations I and the Sex Crimes Unit, in addition to a cadre of volunteer officers and civilian personnel from throughout the San Diego Police Department have committed themselves to this ongoing project for many years. All San Diego officers and employees receive problem solving training. However, Sergeant Archambault first became involved in problem oriented policing in 1988 when she was promoted to sergeant. When she transferred to Sex Crimes in 1993, she immediately began applying the SARA model to sex crimes and sex offender registration efforts. Expectations regarding problem solving and community partnerships are clearly stated



in the Unit's Operations Manual and detectives are evaluated on their problem solving skills on an ongoing basis. Prior to the 1999 School Based Partnership Grant, no monetary resources had been available. The project has only been able to operate without a budget because of the dedication of volunteers and community partners like Dr. Lindsay, who continues to donate many valuable hours to ongoing analysis and community education. The Sex Crimes Unit budget has absorbed the costs for staff time, transparencies, videos and educational material for the speakers. The speakers either volunteer off duty or in some instances, commands allow their personnel to provide presentations on duty.

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*Dangerous Liaisons:  
Non-Stranger Sexual Assault*

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*Sergeant Joanne Archambault  
San Diego Police Department*

*Suzanne Lindsay, Ph.D.  
Graduate School of Public Health, SDSU*

*Partners in Peace Conference  
April 18, 2001*

San Diego Police Department  
1999 Sexual Assaults

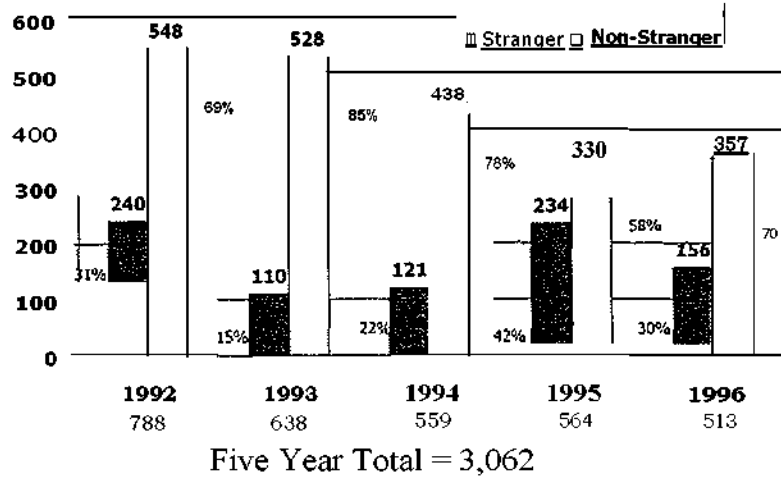


**Non-Stranger**  
VS.  
**Stranger**

Presented by the San Diego Police Department

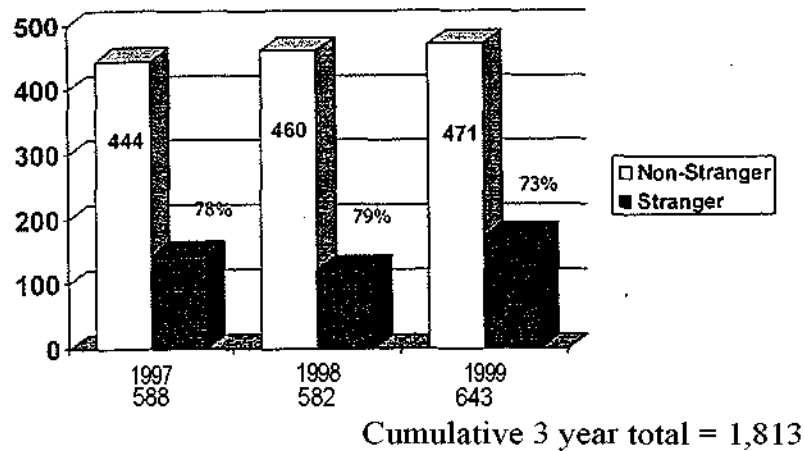
## Stranger vs, Non-Stranger

1992--1996



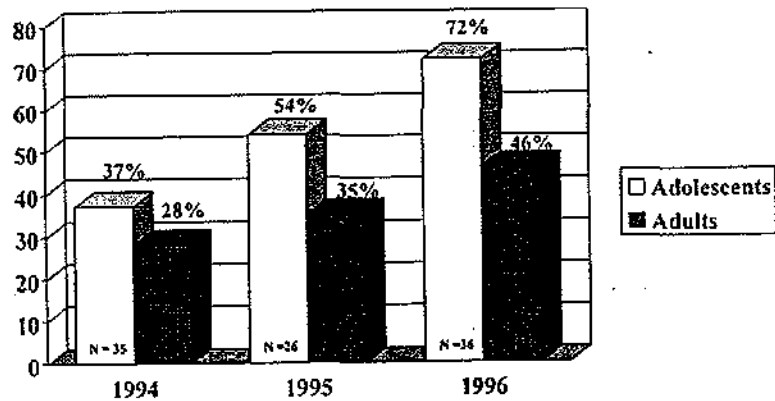
## 1997-1999 Sexual Assaults

Non-Stranger vs. Stranger



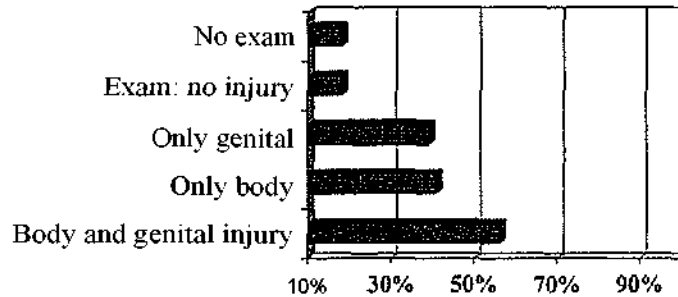
## *A Closer Look at Year of Report*

Percent of DA Reviewed Cases in which a  
Suspect was Charged  
by Year and Age group  
(n=401 cases reviewed by the Office of the District Attorney)



## Evidence of Injury and Suspect Charging

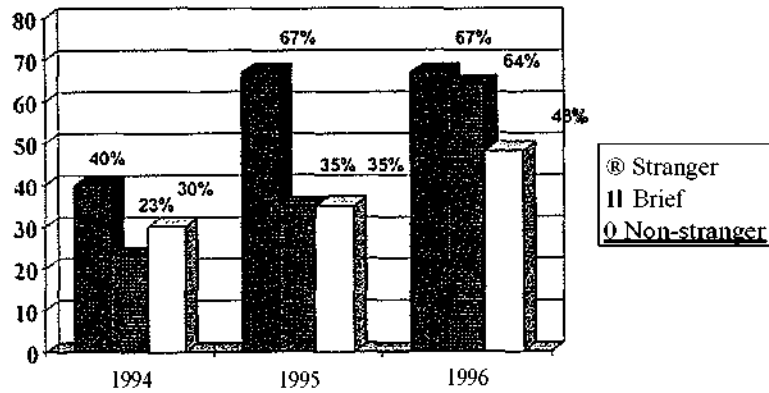
(n=304 adult cases with evidentiary examinations)



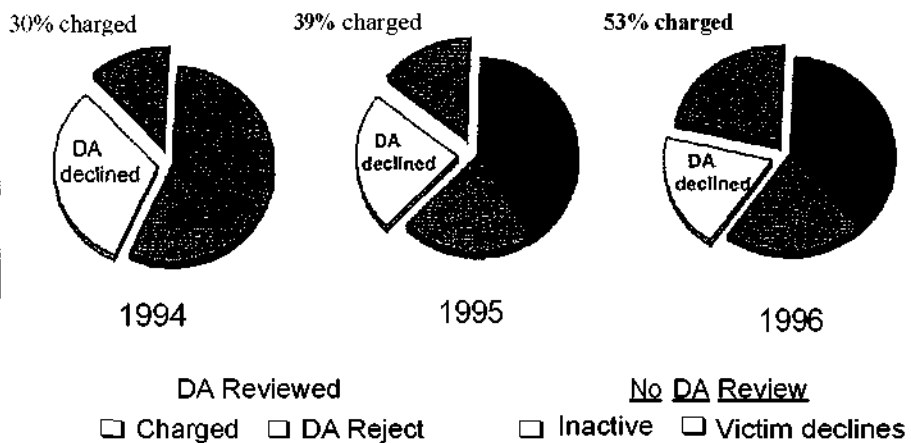
## Factors Associated with Suspect Charging: Adolescent Victims

	OR
<b>Assault reported Min 72 hours</b>	<b>3.2</b>
<b>Assault reported 1995</b>	<b>3.1</b>
<b>Assault reported 1996</b>	<b>7.0</b>

Percent of DA Reviewed Cases in which a Suspect was Charged  
by Year and Relationship of Victim to Suspect  
(n=401 cases reviewed by the Office of the District Attorney)



### implications for Further Research



## *Key Points*

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- *Analyze sexual assault data for discernable patterns*
- *Collaborate! Listen to one another!*
- *Potential victims, offenders, police, healthcare professionals, prosecutors, judges, and jury pools need to be educated about the dynamics of non-stranger assault*

## *Key Points*

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- *Women are at far more risk of sexual assault by a non-stranger than by a stranger.*
- *Develop age-specific information addressing the real life possible sexual assault situations. (not just stranger danger messages)*
- *Begin sexual assault education early!!*

## ***Building on Research:***

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- *Victim Advocates are now present in SDPD Sex Crimes Unit to assist victims as needed*
- *DNA is currently being analyzed in cases without identified suspects*
- *A sexual assault curriculum for school-aged children is being developed with the help of a Community Oriented Policing Grant*

## ***2000: The Youth Sexual Assault Prevention School-Based Partnership***

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- ***Community-Oriented Policing Grant***
- ***Collaborating agencies:***
  - *San Diego Police Department (lead)*
  - *San Diego City Schools*
  - *SDSU Institute for Public Health*
- ***Goal:***
  - *To develop age-appropriate sexual assault curriculum for school-aged children.*



### ***COPS Grant Activities:***

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- ***Examine existing data (police logs)***
- ***Survey key stakeholders***
- ***Conduct focus groups***
- ***Develop curriculum***
- ***Modify Speaker's Bureau***

### ***2001: Survey Stakeholders***

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- ***Students***
- ***Parents***
- ***Teachers***
- ***Law Enforcement (police)***
- ***Victim Advocates***
- ***Medical Personnel***

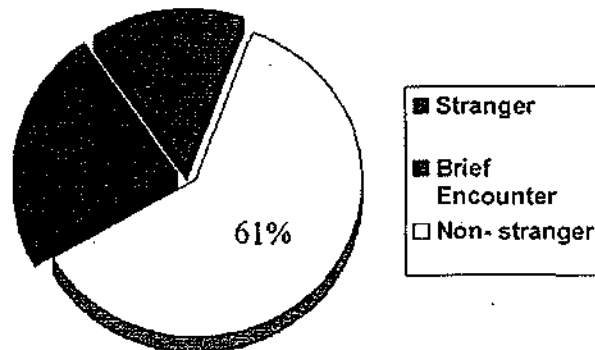
### *Survey Questions:*

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- *Knowledge*
- *Attitudes and Beliefs*
- *Should adolescents learn more about sexual assault?*
- *Who should teach this information?*
- *How should it be taught?*

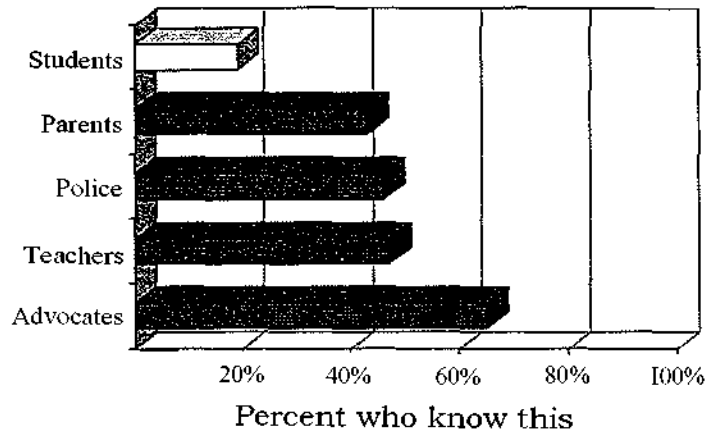
### Adolescent Sexual Assault: Victim Relationship to Suspect

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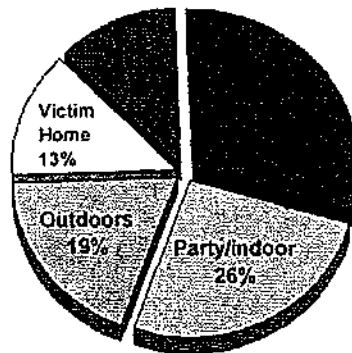
Over 75% of reported adolescent sexual assaults involve non-strangers:

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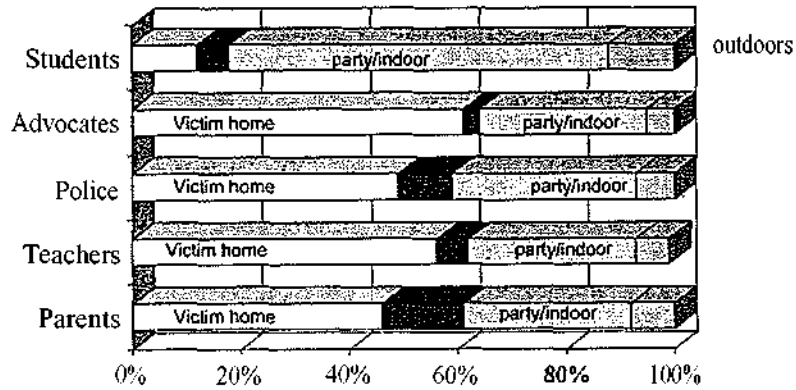


## Adolescent Sexual Assault: Location of Assault

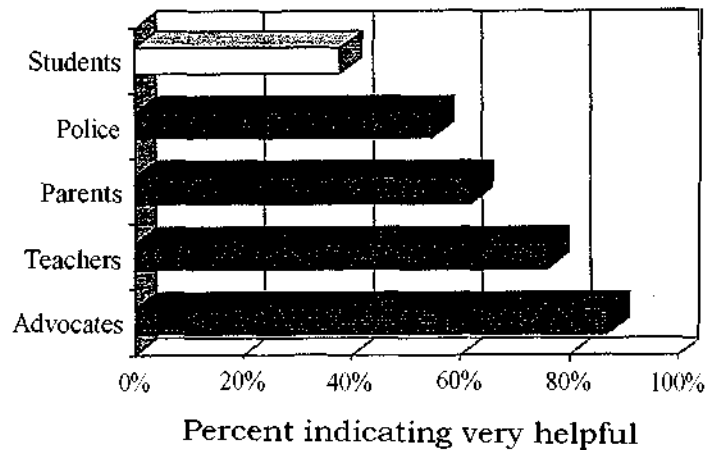
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## What is the most common location of adolescent sexual assault?

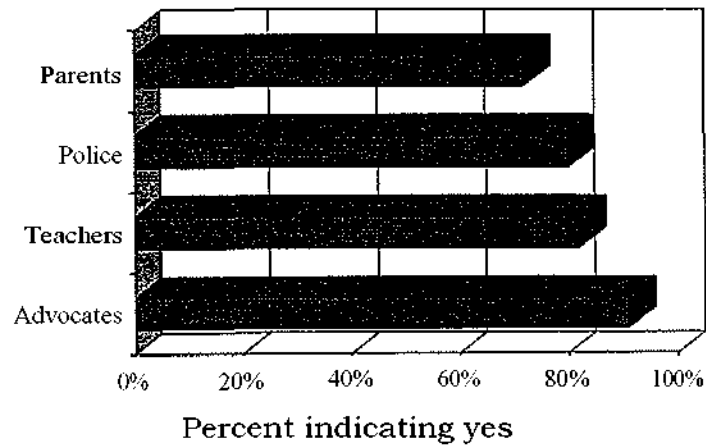


## Do you think it would be helpful for adolescents to learn more about sexual assault?



Should a sexual assault curriculum be taught at school?

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***The majority of parents, teachers, police, and advocates indicated that a sexual assault curriculum should begin no later than the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> grade.***

## **How should this information be taught?**

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- **Teachers:** *Group discussions, Guest speakers, Movies, lectures*
- **Advocates:** *Group discussions, Guest speakers, Movies, lectures*
- **Police:** *Group discussions, Guest speakers, Movies, lectures*
- **Parents:** *Group discussion, Movies, Guest speakers, lectures*
- **Students:** *Movies, Guest speakers, Group discussion, lectures*

## ***Recommendations for Successful School-Based Programs:***

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- ***Identify developmental guidelines***
- ***Provide training opportunities for presenters and other adults***
- ***Identify curriculum/ presentation materials***
- ***Include question and discussion time***

## ***Recommendations for Successful School-Based Programs:***

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- *Provide follow-up that includes opportunities for disclosure*
- *Access to resources*
- *Provide information for parents/community*