

Research on Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence



Intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual violence (SV) endanger the health and well-being of women and men throughout the world. Yet despite a considerable amount of research into this public health and safety problem, researchers continue to be challenged in their efforts to effectively measure the prevalence and nature of IPV and SV. RTI International has been conducting research on crime, violence, justice systems, prevention, and behavioral health for over 30 years, and we conduct a variety of studies specifically related to IPV and SV.

RTI has extensive data collection, research computing, and analytic capabilities that yield valid, comprehensive, actionable data. Our professional staff work across a variety of disciplines, including criminology, social work, economics, law, psychology, public health, and sociology. Using methodologically rigorous approaches, RTI researchers seek results that can advance knowledge about IPV and SV and inform policy, practice, and programs, both nationally and internationally, to reduce the prevalence, consequences, and costs of interpersonal violence.

Project Highlights

RTI has worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on a number of IPV- and SV-related projects:

- RTI and CDC worked collaboratively to design and implement the National Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Surveillance System. This system generates accurate national- and state-level data on

the prevalence and nature of IPV and SV. The sample includes female active duty military personnel and wives of male active duty military personnel, as well as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) men and women, who are being oversampled. The survey instrument and methods were both cognitively tested and pilot tested, and almost 20,000 men and women are being surveyed each year. Results will be disseminated to a broad audience, including the public, other federal agencies, national prevention and service organizations, state health departments, and state-based nongovernmental organizations. The findings will inform the development of programs and policies designed to prevent IPV and SV in the United States.

- RTI developed an inventory of workplace-based approaches for addressing IPV among 26 private-sector, U.S. companies and conducted an in-depth case study of one of the companies. The inventory documented IPV-related workplace activities and explored whether and how a national recession affected workplace services



provided to IPV victims over time. The in-depth case study examined attitudes among both managerial and non-managerial employees regarding IPV as a workplace issue, hypothetical disclosure of IPV, and the relationship between job stress and perpetration of verbal and emotional abuse.

- RTI provided evaluation assistance for a project designed to prevent first-time male perpetration of SV. Phase I included an environmental scan that identified and catalogued prevention programs, and Phase II was an empowerment evaluation in which the RTI project team “coached” program staff from four SV prevention programs to design and conduct their own evaluations.

RTI and CDC collaborated to enhance knowledge about the allocation and uses of CDC’s Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) grants. The project documented the intended goals and objectives of the RPE program from national, state, and local perspective; assessed the allocation mechanisms, uses, and impact of funds for RPE as they relate to these goals; and assessed public health needs of territorial, state, and local programs in terms of knowledge, skills, resources, and barriers to effective implementation.

RTI is working with the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) on several projects related to IPV and SV:

- RTI is researching IPV and SV among college students. Undergraduate women at both historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and non-HBCUs have been surveyed about their experiences with IPV and SV. Results are being used to describe the prevalence and nature of the problem and to inform prevention, risk reduction, and service provision activities.
- RTI is studying IPV and SV among AI/AN women who are living on reservation lands. In addition to capturing data on the prevalence and nature of interpersonal violence among this population, we are compiling information on the federal and tribal responses to instances of IPV and SV.

- RTI conducted an evidence-based review of evaluation research on sexual assault preventative interventions (SAPIs). This study documented the knowledge generated by 59 studies, identified significant gaps in SAPI evaluation research, and provided recommendations for future sexual assault prevention practice and research.

Through a Department of Defense–funded grant, RTI is examining two critical areas of co-occurrence: (1) spouse abuse and child abuse that occur in the same family, and (2) substance use by soldiers identified as a spouse abuse or child abuse offender. The research is investigating Army service provider efforts to coordinate services to address co-occurrence, coordination between Army and civilian service providers, barriers to help-seeking and service utilization by families, barriers to service linkage among providers, and characteristics of the Army environment that facilitate or impede early identification and coordinated treatment of co-occurrence.

Through a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation grant, RTI worked with Johns Hopkins University to develop an inventory of 28 external employee assistance programs and the ways in which they address IPV. The inventory and resulting journal articles provided detailed information on EAP methods for screening, identifying, and responding to IPV victimization and perpetration as well as recommendations for improving these processes.

More Information

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