

Stalking & Victims with Disabilities

Stalking
resource center

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
Victims of Crime

Violence Against Women

Women with disabilities experience the highest rate of personal violence – violence at the hands of spouses, partners, boyfriends, family members, caregivers, and strangers – of any group in our society today.

(Abramson, W., Emanuel, E., Gaylord, V., & Hayden, M. (Eds.). (2000). Impact: Feature Issue on Violence Against Women with Developmental or Other Disabilities, 13 (3). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration.)

Stalking

Addressing Stalking Myths

- Stalking only happens to celebrities.
- You can't be stalked by someone you are still dating.
- Stalking isn't dangerous.
- Modern technology is too expensive and confusing for most stalkers to use.

Stalking

Stalking is a pattern of behavior directed at a specific person that would put a reasonable person in *fear*

Dynamics of Stalking

- Stalking cases are often hard to identify
- Seemingly non-criminal behaviors become criminal in stalking cases

Understanding Stalking

“Sometimes I unlock my car and find a rose on the seat—no note, just the rose.

Somehow he got into my car and left it there; it’s all he needs to do to terrorize me.”

Stalking behaviors against V/W/D

- Offender's may use power and control to:
 - Monopolize on a victim's real or perceived vulnerability
 - Use authority over the victim to obtain 'consent' for sexual contact or other behaviors

Stalking behaviors against V/W/D

- Manipulation of victims' use of assistive technologies
 - Examples: email, TTY machines, etc.
 - Talk to victims about what assistive technologies they use and ways in which offenders may manipulate those technologies.
 - Contact NNEDV's SafetyNet team for more info on abuse of assistive technologies: safetynet@nnedv.org

Prevalence of Stalking

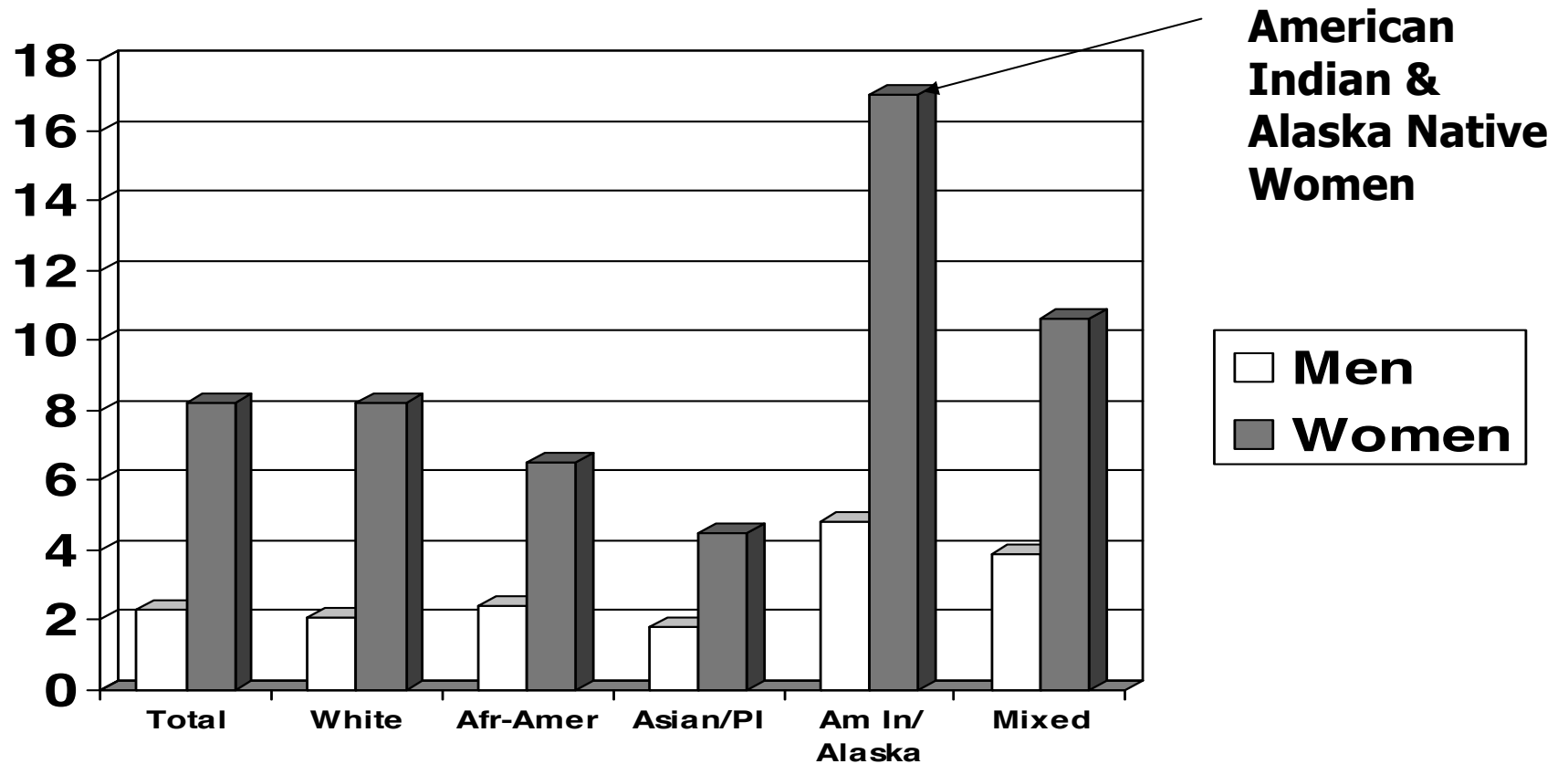
- 1 out of every 12 U.S. Women
- 1 out of every 45 U.S. men
- 13.1% of college women stalked during one 9-month period

Approximately **1.4 million** people are stalked in America *every year*

(National Violence Against Women Survey, Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998)

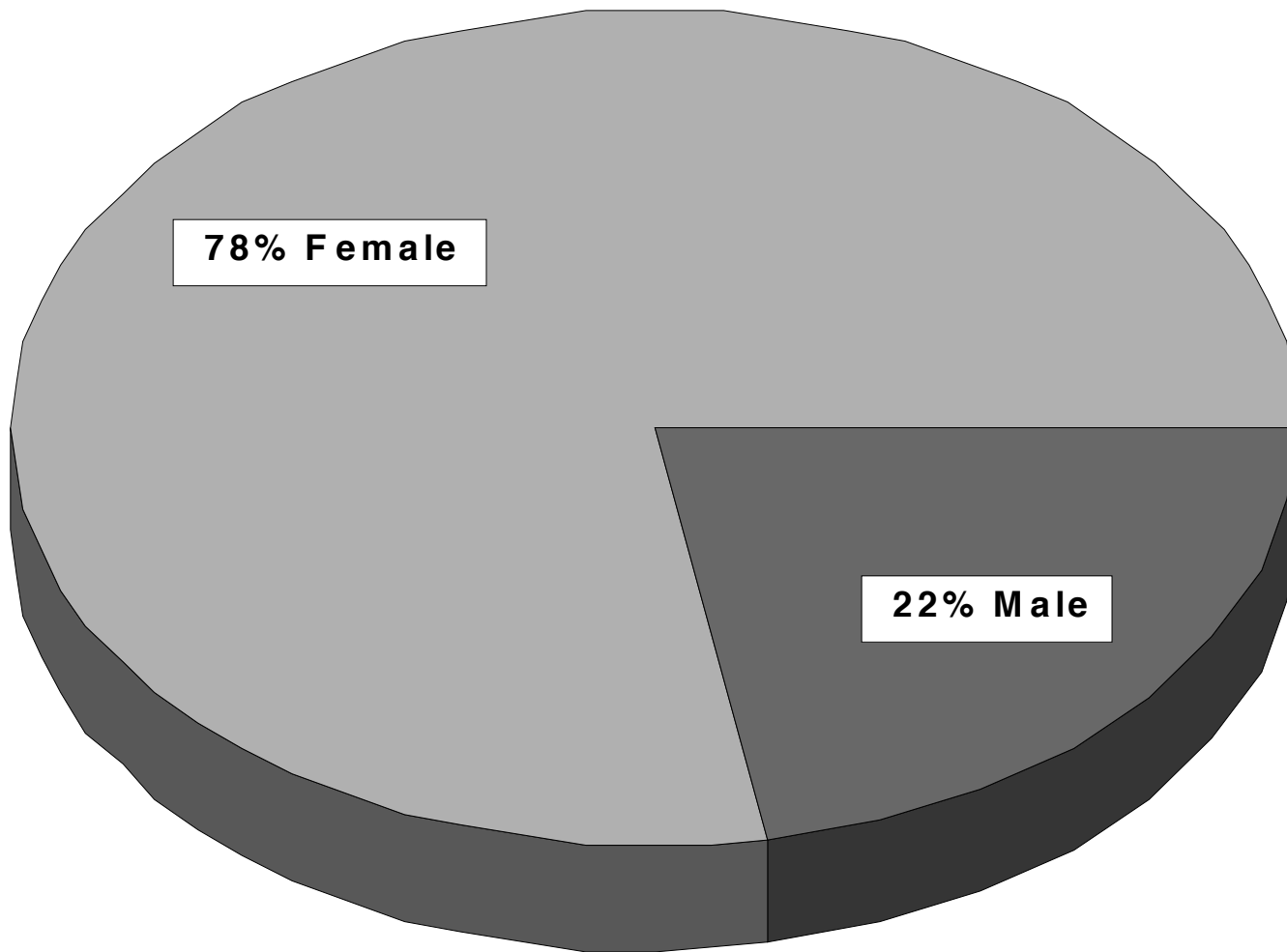
(National Sexual Victimization of College Women, Fisher, Cullen & Turner, 2000)

Persons Stalked in Lifetime (%)



(National Violence Against Women Survey, Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998)

Gender of Stalking Victims



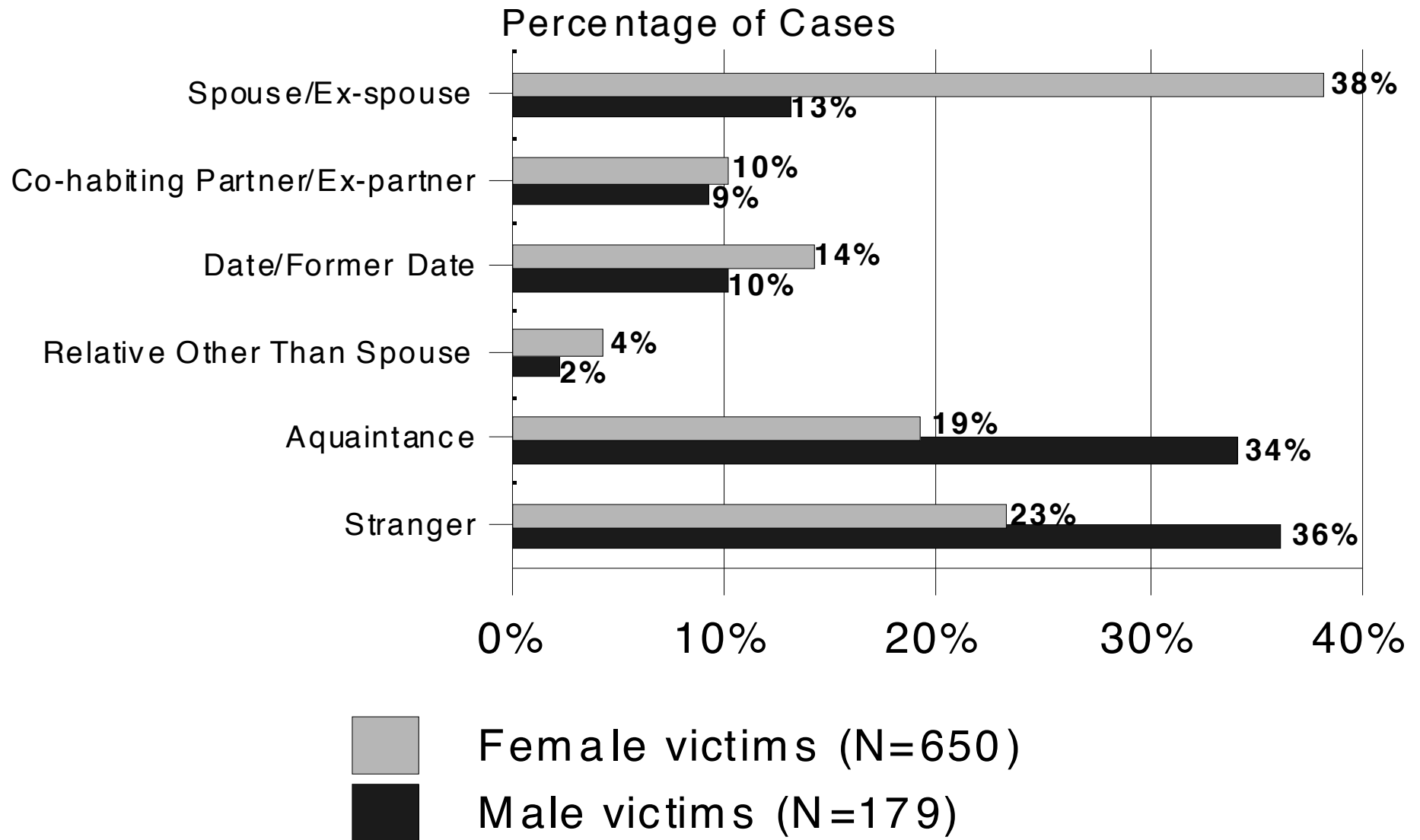
(National Violence Against Women Survey, Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998)

Understanding Stalking

- 94% of female victims were stalked by **men**
- 60% of male victims were stalked by **men**
- Overall, 87% of stalkers were **men**

(National Violence Against Women Survey, Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998)

Relationship Between Victim and Offender



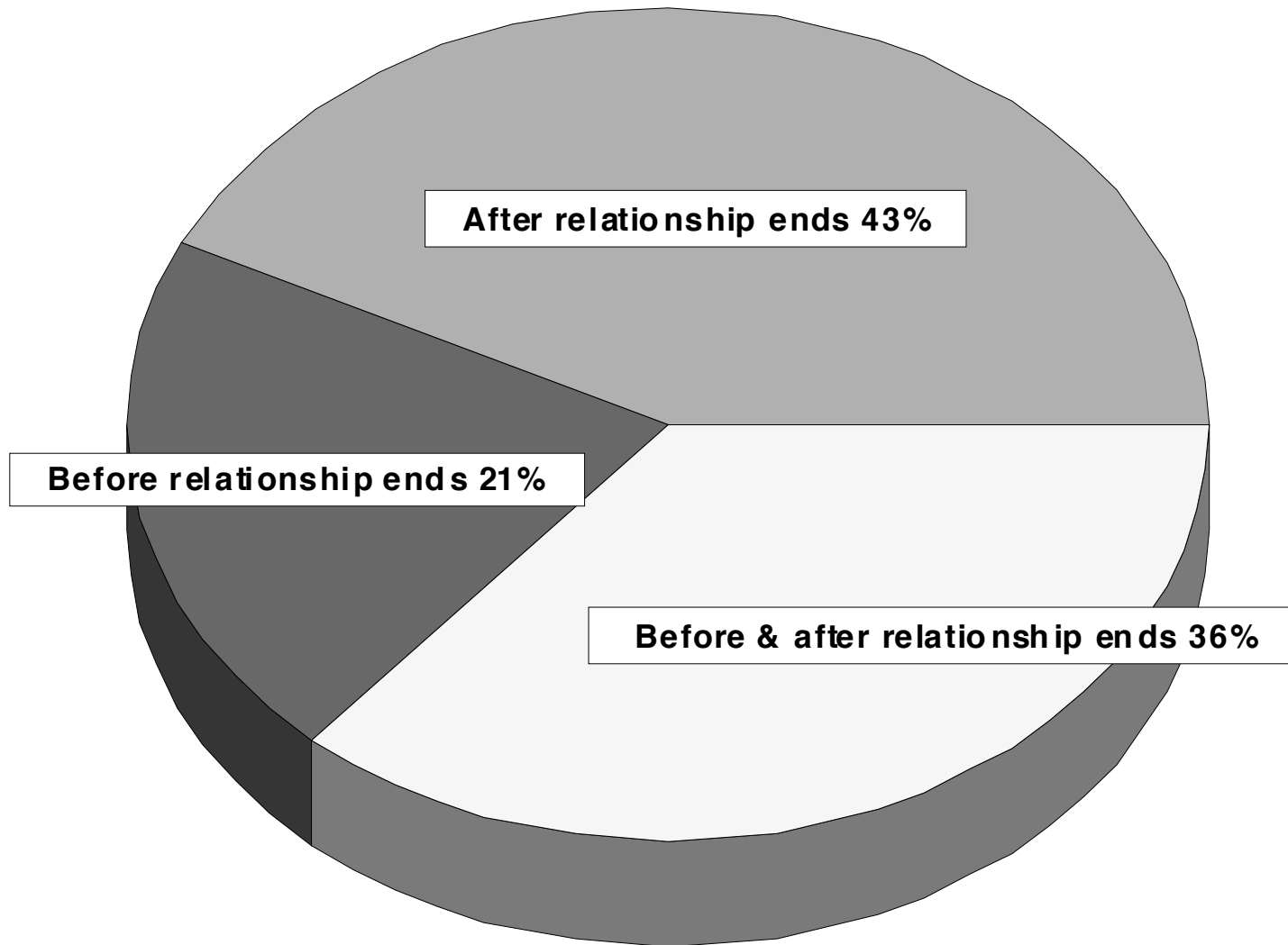
(National Violence Against Women Survey, Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998)

Connection to Domestic Violence

81% of victims stalked by their intimate partner report **previous physical assaults** by the same offender

(National Violence Against Women Survey, Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998)

Point in Intimate Relationship When Stalking of Women Occurs



N=263 female victims

Intimate Partner Stalkers = Increased Risk for Victims

- More likely to physically approach victim
- More insulting, interfering and threatening
- More likely to use weapons
- More likely to re-offend
- Behaviors more likely to escalate quickly

Connection to Sexual Assault

- 31% of women stalked by her intimate partner were also sexually assaulted by that partner

National Violence Against Women Survey, Tjaden & Thoennes (1998)

- In 10.3% of campus stalking incidents, the victim reported that the stalker forced or attempted sexual contact

National Sexual Victimization of College Women, Fisher, Cullen & Turner (2000)

Connection to Sexual Assault

In one study of men who admitted committing acts that met the legal definition of sexual assault, the participants reported:

- They “staked out” their victims.
- They considered women “targets” and “prey.”

Behaviors that met the definition of stalking occurred both pre- and post-sexual assault.

Lethality of Stalking Cases



“It’s going to take getting a bullet put in my head before people understand how serious this is.”

Lethality of Stalking Cases

3 out of 4 females **murdered** by their intimate partners had been **stalked** by that offender at least once in the year prior to the murder

(Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide, McFarlane et al., 1999)

Lethality of Stalking Cases

- 2 out of 3 females murdered by their intimate partner had been physically abused by that person in the 12 months prior to the murder.
- Almost 90% of those abused & murdered victims had **also** been stalked in the 12 months prior to the murder.

(Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide, McFarlane et al., 1999)

Lethality of Stalking Cases

Physical Abuse
+ Stalking

**= Higher indicator of lethality
than either behavior alone**

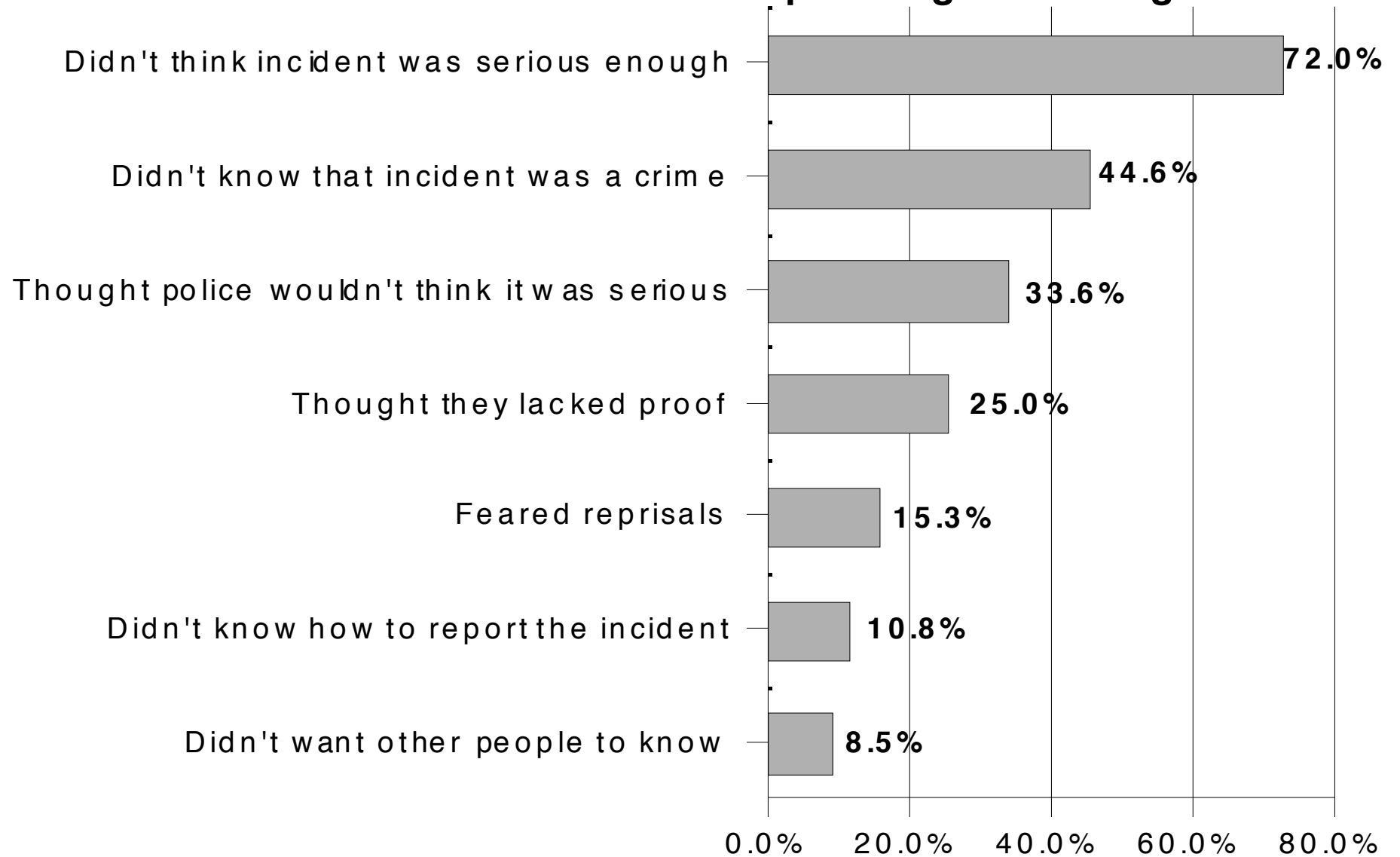
(Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide, McFarlane et al., 1999)

Reporting to Law Enforcement

- 54% of **femicide victims** reported stalking to police in the year before they were killed by their stalkers.
- 46% of **attempted femicide victims** reported stalking to police in the year prior to the attempted murder.

(Stalking and Intimate Partner Femicide, McFarlane et al., 1999)

Reason For Not Reporting Stalking



(National Sexual Victimization of College Women, Fisher, Cullen & Turner, 2000)

Reporting for V/W/D

- Access to reporting
- Victims may be considered incompetent witnesses by police and the courts, particularly if they have difficulty, or require assistance in, communicating

Additional Consequences of Reporting

- Women with developmental disabilities may have particular difficulties escaping domestic violence because many fear leaving an abusive partner could result in:
 - Reinstitutionalization
 - Having children taken away from them

Stalkers



Profiles

**THERE ARE NO
DEFINITIVE
CATEGORIES OF
STALKERS!**

Demographics

Criminal History:

- 33% had prior adult violent criminal history
- 27% had no priors
- 19% had prior adult non-violent criminal record

Demographics

- 46% of offenders had a clear or probable DSM-IV-TR diagnosis at time of stalking
- Substance abuse present in 32% of cases
- Suicidal ideation present in 25% of cases

Stalkers of V/W/D

- People with disabilities are more likely to depend on their abusers for food, personal care services, health care support, and other vital roles.

Stalkers of V/W/D

- Use the victim's disability or difficulty in communicating to discredit her story if she tells it
- Be more believable to law enforcement, particularly if he is in a position of authority

Why do they stalk?

- Rejection
- Obsession
- Power & Control
- Sexual Gratification
- Planning to commit a crime
- Because they can

Impact on Victims

Mental/Emotional Impact

- 80% of victims reported increased anxiety
- 30% of victims developed Post traumatic Stress Disorder
- 25% of victims considered or attempted suicide

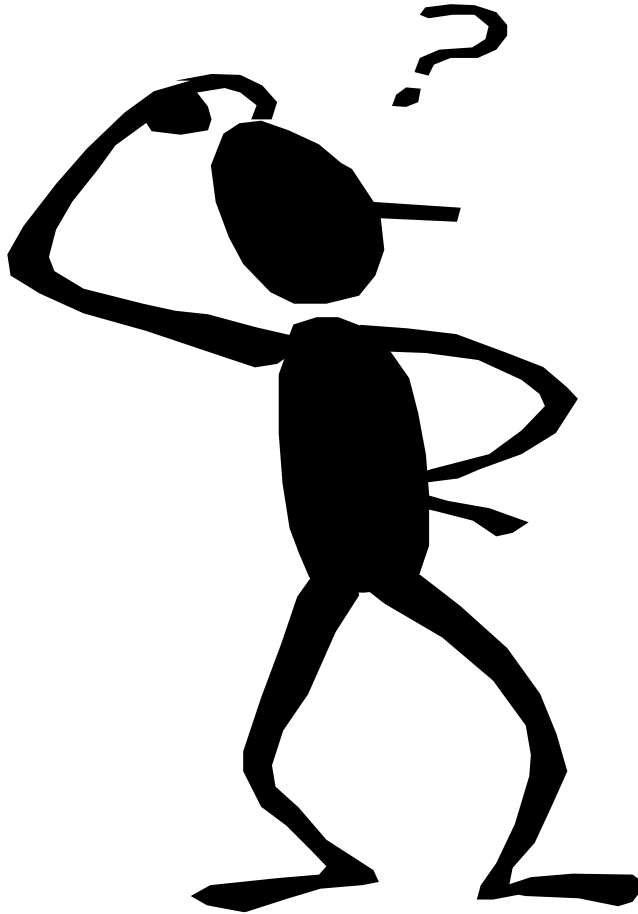
Impact on Victims

Financial Impact

- 26% reported that they lost time from work
- 7% were never able to return to their jobs
- 11% of female victims relocated

*National Violence Against Women Survey, Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998
Management of Victims of Stalking, Pathe, Mullen, & Purcell, 2001*

What Can We Do?



Improving System Responses

- **Understanding Victim Reactions**
- **Criminal Charges**
- **Civil Remedies**
- **Advocacy Tips**

Understanding Victim Reactions

- Active resistance
- Help seeking
- Coping to reduce danger
- Coping by complying with stalker's demands

Understanding Victim Reactions

- No Contact/Disengagement
 - Intermittent Reinforcement
 - Negotiation/Minimizing Harm
- No Contact Letters

Criminal Charges

- State Stalking Statutes
- Federal Stalking Statute (18 USCS §2261A)
- Uniform Code of Military Justice (Art 120a)
- Tribal Stalking Codes
- Creative Charging

Civil Remedies

- Protective Orders
 - Eligibility for Domestic orders
 - Availability of Sexual Assault orders
 - Availability of Stalking orders
 - Violations
 - 81% of Male victims
 - 69% of Female victims
- Civil Tort Claims

Working with Stalking Victims

- Safety
- Documentation
- Support

Documentation

- 2/3 of stalkers pursue their victim at least once per week
- 78% of stalkers use more than one means of approach

(The RECON Typology of Stalking, Journal of Forensic Sciences, Mohandie et al, 2006)

Documentation

STALKING INCIDENT LOG

Date	Time	Description of Incident	Location of Incident	Witness Name(s) (Attach Address and Phone #)	Police Called (Report #)	Officer Name (Badge #)

Documentation for V/W/D

Alternative Forms of Documentation:

- Digital voice recorder
- Blackberry/Cell phones
- Log with instructions for attendants or providers
- Others?

Support

Available services for stalking victims?

- Advocacy
 - Assistance with filing stalking complaint
 - Assistance with evidence collection and coordination with law enforcement
 - Court accompaniment
 - Relocation assistance
 - Safety Planning
- Individual counseling
- Support Groups

Support for V/W/D

- Access to Services and the Justice System
- Confidentiality
- Varying Routes and Schedules
 - Reliance on service systems

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
Victims of Crime

Sandy Bromley

Stalking Resource Center

Practitioners: 202-467-8700

Victims: 1-800-FYI-CALL

www.ncvc.org/src